



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A NEEDLE
&
THREAD





A NEEDLE AND THREAD.





‘LITTLE NELLIE’S DREAM.’—A NEEDLE AND THREAD, page 155.



A NEEDLE AND THREAD:

A TALE FOR GIRLS.



BY

EMMA J. BARNES,

AUTHOR OF "FAITHFUL AND TRUE; OR, THE MOTHER'S LEGACY."

EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.
1873.

1489. f. 290

EDINBURGH :
PRINTED BY M'FARLANE AND ERSKINE,
(late Schenck & M'Farlane,)
ST JAMES' SQUARE.



P R E F A C E.

TO the dear young friends who so kindly received a former story, I again venture to address another, in the hope that it may be found both pleasing and instructive.

The following pages may be able only to express to you my own affectionate sympathy ; but if in a single instance they should be instrumental in checking the growth of a wayward and selfish spirit, and instead thereof should implant the desire to live a life of benevolent usefulness, in humble dependence on the support of a higher Power, then indeed my dearest wish will have been realised in the production of this little story.

E. J. B.

	PAGE
CHAPTER IX.	
FRANK'S STORY,	105
CHAPTER X.	
ALMOST DESPAIRING,	123
CHAPTER XI.	
THE STRANGER,	136
CHAPTER XII.	
MATCHES OR MUSIC,	150
CHAPTER XIII.	
HOPING AGAINST HOPE,	163
CHAPTER XIV.	
A DOOR AJAR,	179
CHAPTER XV.	
THREADED AT LAST,	195






A NEEDLE AND THREAD.



CHAPTER I.

THE LITTLE BALLAD-SINGER.

“ET up, will ye, and tie the things together ; d’ye hear, Nell?” growled a woman’s voice from a low truckle-bed occupying the corner of a dirty room in a common lodging-house in Havre.

To enforce her words, the speaker stretched out an arm, and seizing a heavy boot, flung it violently at something like a bundle of rags and straw lying opposite. “D’ye hear, ye lazy imp?” she called again. A small white face rose slowly from the heap, looking sadly wan and wretched as the grey shining of the early morning fell upon it through the murky skylight.

"I'm awake," answered a sleepy voice, and Nell sat up, rubbed her eyes, and threw aside her tangled hair.

"Ye'd better be," said the woman, turning over for another nap. Seeing her again asleep, the child ventured to follow her example in spite of the rough command, and was in a few moments back in the land of dreams.

When next she awoke, the sun was trying hard to penetrate the wintry skies and thick green glass. Springing up restless and anxious, she gazed around. She was alone—her companions, the boots, the bundle she ought to have put together, were all gone, and everything was quiet, except when the hum of voices or the clatter of crockery rose from the kitchen below. Nell's toilet did not take long. She made a fruitless attempt to pull a piece of broken comb through her curls, pushed her slender feet into a pair of worn boots, slipped dexterously into a faded dress trimmed with tarnished silver thread, and with a small shawl over her shoulders, and a torn straw hat on her head, the little street-singer was ready to face the world.

Creeping cautiously along the passage, and guiding herself by the wall down the dimly-lighted stairs, she entered the living-room, and peering about amongst the crowd of noisy chattering people eating, drink-



·Nell's toilet did not take long. She made a fruitless attempt to pull a piece of broken comb through her curls.'—A NEEDLE AND THREAD, page 2.



ing, and idling, caught sight of a man and woman sitting rather apart from the rest of the company.

"It's to be hoped ye're rested," remarked Moll Jenks, as Nell joined them, a faint colour flickering on her cheeks.

"Yes," she answered, watching fearfully the heavy hand leaning on the table.

With a laugh the woman caught her arm, and jerking it sharply, said—"You don't get no breakfast; them as can't get up can't eat. Are ye hungry?"

"Yes," said Nell again, trying to twist herself free.

"Glad of it; it'll be a lesson to ye. You've done nothin', so you'll get nothin';" and with a parting grip and shake, Moll let go the tiny, tortured arm, and nodded her head triumphantly.

No cry escaped the child; she knew that she was helpless; only the sullen drooping of her lips and the quiver of her eyelids betrayed her trouble. All this time, the man, Bill Jenks, had been a passive, and even an amused, spectator, though his face was neither ill-natured nor cruel, like that of his wife; but now, taking his pipe from his mouth, he shook out some ashes and exclaimed—

"It's as good as a play, Moll, to see you a-going on with that there little lass. You're the cat and she's the mouse; but don't you spoil bus'niss with too much edication. It's all very well for you to be

a-teaching of her to do her dooty and mind what's said to her ; but she shan't lose her meals for nothin', or, you see, she won't sing, and she brings in more tin than any dodge we've tried this long while. So look out, Moll, and let her have her sleep and her wittles too, as I've tell't ye afore."

Here Bill stroked his beard in much satisfaction with himself and his speech, and resumed his pipe with a complacent puff. He seldom interfered, but Moll knew, when he did, her wisest plan was to submit.

Muttering crossly, she bid Nell come and finish what was left from their repast. Not many minutes after, Jenks rose and went to pay his bill, and Moll took the opportunity to say—"You'll see what ye'll get if ye don't do as ye're bid another time, and he shan't stand up for ye. Put the bread in the basket, and come along."

Nell sorrowfully obeyed, and brushing away the ready tears, followed Jenks and Moll into the street.

They had proceeded some distance towards a better part of the town, when the former said—

"Now, Nell, this is the last day we shall have on French ground for a while, and I advise you to sing your best, and get enough to pay your passage to London, else I don't see as how we shan't have to drop you overboard, to swim there as ye can, or feed the fishes !"

"D'ye hear?" cried Moll, fiercely. "Why don't ye never answer when ye're spoke to?"

"I don't know," said Nell, shortly.

"You'll sing well, now, won't you, my pretty dear?" asked Bill, coaxingly.

"Yes ; I'll try," replied Nell, going nearer to him as they walked along, feeling grateful for kind words.

"Soft soap's a hexcellent thing," he soliloquised.

"Now, Nell, tune up," he continued, when they had reached a quarter which his practised eyes thought likely to yield a fair harvest of sous and centimes. "English, mind—the 'Troubadour' to start with."

Nell obediently gave the basket to Moll, and holding out her hat, waited while Bill played a few preliminary notes on his flute, and then began—

"Gaily the Troubadour touched his guitar," etc.

Uncultivated, and even sharpened slightly by ill-usage and cold, it was nevertheless an exquisite voice. Wonderful in its clearness and sweetness, wild and sad as the little singer's life, and expressive as her wistful face, it went forth with bird-like purity into the wintry air, and echoed in the hearts of its hearers. No wonder Bill said she paid well. As for Nell herself, her love and power of song was the one bright spot of her existence. As she sang, her countenance lost much of its expression of dread ; a strange brilliancy shone

from her eyes, and traces of pink warmed her thin cheeks. She forgot for a time how unhappy she was, how lonely, how unloved ; the spirit of music charmed away her sorrow, and brought to her dreams of joy and love. Many a passer-by threw her a trifle ; once a dark-eyed Frenchwoman drew aside the white curtain of her window, and looked out kindly as the sounds rose quivering to her ears. Then the casement was opened, and some sous came clattering down upon the road. Nell thanked her with a smile, and the giver stole back on tiptoe to the farther side of the room, where, in a shaded alcove, her child lay dying. He raised his heavy eyelids as she approached, and whispered—"Ma mère, I have heard the good angels calling me ; I am not afraid now, ma mère !" Tears fell from the mother's eyes, as she kissed her boy, and blessed the little wayfarer for the comfort that her sweet voice had brought, though the words were in a foreign tongue.

Meanwhile the three strolled slowly on. Noon came, and Moll gave Nell the remainder of her breakfast, "to put on with," as she said. Having had unusual good fortune, Bill generously decided to take his wife and Nell to an eating-house to have a good dinner before starting later in the evening for London. But, greedy of gain, he tarried here and there, until it was evident that Nell could sing no more

that day. Aching little feet they were which toiled after Jenks and Moll, and a throbbing brow it was which wondered and questioned why she was so tired and miserable, while other children had kind friends and warm clothes. "There don't anybody care for me," she said to herself, when Moll shouted to her to make haste. They reached their destination at length, and Nell was very glad indeed to sit and rest. Something in her attitude, as she did so, touched even Bill's selfish heart, and he said, in his most affable manner, while waiting for the coming feast—

"You've been a good girl to-day, Nell, and I'll give ye a penny some day, and at this present ye may come and sit aside of me and fill my pipe." Nell's opinion of Bill's promises was not high; she had often known them broken, so she tried not to hope for the money.

The second reward, however, was worth accepting, and she placed the table between herself and Moll as quickly as possible. The latter growled something about the "child being ruined;" but her husband paid her no attention, being flattered by Nell's evident preference for him, as well as agreeably interested by the odour of a savoury stew just placed before him. Of all Nell's troubles—and they were many—none give her more constant anxiety than Moll Jenks's hands. To be sure they did not often deal out blows, for the master considered that, as a general

rule, that "didn't pay;" but they gave what the little girl dreaded even more, hard pinches and iron grasps, which, without harming the voice, were terribly painful and subduing.

Nell was too valuable and frail to be beaten and knocked about, as many are such as she; but she learned to fear those strong, cruel fingers, as some children fear the black man of the cross nursery-maid, or the dark room of the unprincipled governess,—and with more reason, for her arm proved the reality of Moll's wickedness and strength. Those hands were also a memory of horror to the child, reminding her of a time when blows had fallen thick and fast, and been succeeded by heavy sleepy days, from which she had awakened to find herself in a strange place, amongst strange faces and new scenes. Beyond those days no effort could carry her, no struggles to remember could picture distinctly in waking hours the shadowy images which frequently flitted through her dreams, mocking her by their smiles and beauty.

Gradually, however, these visions grew rarer, and the past dimmer and dimmer. The wants, the weariness, the lovelessness of the present claimed all her thoughts. Too gentle and timid to resist, too young and feeble to escape, both mind and body were slowly becoming dull and apathetic, her longing for love and her talent for music alone keeping alive in her a moral and mental life.



CHAPTER II.

MAUD KNOLLIS.

WITH her face pressed to the window of the room generally known in Lady Lesley's London mansion as the nursery, stood a girl some years older, and very different in every respect from the ballad-singer Nell. Maud Knollis was not precisely a pretty child, yet all felt her to be peculiarly attractive. Whether it was the expression of her dark eyes, shadowed so wondrously by their long lashes, or the decision of her small, curved mouth, or the graceful bend of her slender neck, it would be impossible to tell. She shivered as she gazed down on the rare passers-by in the square below, and presently glanced at the well-guarded fire, to see if it were burning brightly this cold, dull afternoon. In doing so, her eyes fell for a moment on a book lying

open on a chair near. Turning away hastily from the unwelcome object, she resumed her former position, and said to herself—"I cannot see the use of all that stuff. Why should I have to learn English grammar, when I can speak English perfectly? If I were like Justine, now, I could understand it, for she is still very ignorant; but for me, I think it quite unnecessary—'entirely superfluous,' as Aunt Lesley would say; so I shall not trouble about it. I dare say Miss Clarke will be very cross, but that can't be helped; and after all, she can only be a little worse than usual. She's crosser than Miss Moss at Hollywood; I wish she could have come to London with us. I think Miss Clarke is horrid. Oh, dear! I wish the old days were back again, when we were all together at Nice. If only papa knew how dull I am, I'm sure he wouldn't stay away so long. I wonder what it is keeps him. Let me see! it's one, two, three years since we came to England. *We* came! Oh, dear! I dare not think of that;" and Maud's reflections ended suddenly with a deep sigh and another shiver.

To get rid of the troublesome thought, she took up the lesson, and looked at it for a few minutes; but evidently it was not satisfactory, for she shut it up impatiently, threw it again on the chair, and returned to the window. The sky was grey and gloomy, the trees in the square gardens were dreary and leafless, the few

carriages to be seen were tightly closed, nothing was cheerful or interesting in the very least ; and poor Maud was, as she appeared, even sadder and more lonely than the outside world. The half-dozen dirty little sparrows on the area railings seemed to mock her, for they followed their leader hither and thither perseveringly. The bare branches knocked against each other as the wind blew, the raindrops came down in company, and even the swimming gutter had a brother to talk with over the way. But Maud had no one, and, what was still more trying, she had nothing to do—that is, “nothing nice ;” the lesson was the only disagreeable possibility, and it might perchance have been learned in the end, if entertainment had not turned up at the very moment when English grammar was winning the fight by means of English weather.

“Why, that’s Miss Castaine, I do declare, and that parcel will be my new dress. How glad I am she’s coming ; I like her, and she will amuse me a little.”

Resolutely withholding her eyes from the book, Maud ran to the head of the stairs to watch for the dressmaker. Leaning over the balustrade, she soon saw her enter a room below, usually called the work-room.

“Good morning, Miss Castaine. I’m sure it’s by special mercy you’re come to-day,” Maud heard Dawkins, the lady’s-maid, exclaim in a peevish voice, as

she threw open the workroom door with an elegant sweep.

"I never saw any one so common or so funny as Dawkins," thought the little girl, seeing the *grand* *entrée* from her perch. "She thinks she can patronise Miss Castaine, because aunt says she only employs her out of charity, and to please Mrs Danvers. Hush! what's that she's saying?"

- "Which it's quite a mercy you've come, as I said before," continued the maid; "for I'm quite overcome with work, and my nerves are giving way. There's some people, Miss Castaine, who've no more consideration nor stocks an' stones. Only think! I'm the only lady's-maid at present, and her Ladyship's daughter, Miss Lesley, has taken the pet because she don't like her dress for the Countess of Huntley's 'soiry,' though it's been made by a first-class milliner. Well, she don't like it, and she'll have it altered, and how I'm to arrange all the 'coiffeurs' and do the dress too, is more than I can tell; so I say it's a mercy you're here, for let's hope you can stop and give me a helping hand."

"Willingly," answered the dressmaker, smiling as the maid's tones changed during her speech from patronage to entreaty. "I will gladly help you after I have tried on this dress of Miss Maud's."

"Capital!" thought Maud, descending the stairs.

"Miss Castaine wants you, Miss Maud. She has brought your new frock, and wishes to try it on." So saying, Dawkins retired.

"You have finished my new dress, Dawkins says," remarked Maud, giving Kate a gracious little bow.

"Yes, Miss Maud, and now I want to see if it becomes you nicely," replied Kate Castaine.

Miss Castaine, dressmaker and seamstress, as her small well-polished brass door-plate said, was a middle-aged woman. There was nothing remarkable either in her face or figure, except the general air of honest genial kindness and intelligence. But behind the common-place somewhat wrinkled exterior, beat a heart so good and faithful—so full of love and hope, that trials, poverty, and sorrow alike had been powerless to break it. Once she had lived in a sunny cottage in the country, far away from this desert of houses. She could remember flowery lanes, and mossy ferny dells, where rosy-faced children wove chains of daisies and dandelions, and the sweet-voiced birds, in their sober plumage, trilled and piped their lays in heaven's own language of happiness from morn till eve. These were but memories now. Unexpected reverses had driven her from the old home, and obliged her to seek a livelihood in the city. How hard had been her struggles—how weary, and hungry, and sad she had been in her

day, she alone could have told. But though only earning a modest competence, Kate's boat had pretty well weathered its storms, and was for the present sailing through pleasanter waters. In the time of her greatest need, she went to the clergyman of her parish, Mr Danvers, who referred her to his wife. After that she was able to breathe more easily. Mrs Danvers stood by her, gave her work, and introduced her to some of her friends, amongst others, to Maud's aunt, Lady Lesley. For her Kate had worked occasionally for two or three years during the season, but this being the first time Maud had accompanied the family to town, they had only recently become acquainted. Thus into the midst of Maud's lonely life came Kate Castaine like a gleam of sunshine. Something about her pleased the little girl; instinctively she acknowledged the goodness of the woman, though she was only a dressmaker.

"Do you live far from here?" asked Maud, after watching the deft fingers fastening the frock.

"Not very, miss; about ten minutes' walk, perhaps," replied Kate.

"I should like to come and see you at your home some day, as Liliias Danvers says she does."

"I shall be pleased to see you, miss, if Lady Lesley will allow you to come," and Kate smiled.

"Ah! as to that," replied the little lady, with the

least shrug of her pretty white shoulders, "I have no doubt aunt will let me if I wish. Of course Justine, my *bonne*—my nurse, you know—will come with me."

Kate smiled again, and Maud, after a pause, remarked abruptly—

"You were not always a dressmaker, were you?" "I beg your pardon," she added immediately. "I didn't mean to be rude. I was thinking aloud."

"You are right, Miss Maud. I once lived in the country, in a home of my own," answered Kate, readily.

"Aren't you sorry to live in this smoky, horrid London, then? I am. I wanted aunt to leave me and Justine at Hollywood, as she has done before, but she wouldn't. Oh! I hate London."

"So do I, sometimes," said Kate, with a sigh, "and then I wish myself amongst the woods and fields again; but we must try and be contented. God is in the town just as much as in the country, and we may love and serve Him just as well amongst the houses as amongst the trees and flowers. The great Husbandman is everywhere. The trees of the city are men."

"And I, then," continued Maud, as Kate paused, her mind roving miles away from Lady Lesley's work-room—"I am a flower perhaps, or a little shrub. What would you call me, Miss Castaine?"

Before answering, Kate drew back and surveyed the questioner. Her eyes, wide open and bright, were full of interest; her red lips were parted in expectancy, discovering the tips of the pearly teeth between; and the rose-coloured dress showed off in all its brilliancy the dazzling whiteness of her complexion and the graceful contour of her small figure.

"You are like," said Kate, half sorry to speak and spoil the picture,—“you remind me of a sweet briar in a neglected garden. The true Rose, has been grafted in, but there is pruning and training wanted.”

“What do you mean?” asked Maud, quickly.

“I will tell you my meaning another time; perhaps you may guess it before we meet again.”

“I like you,” said the little girl, without a trace of her usual petulant manner.

“And I you,” was Kate’s gentle answer, her heart yearning over the sweet wilful child.

As she spoke, the door opened wider, and admitted a good-looking woman, whose dark skin told of southern blood and a hotter sun than that of England.

“Ah! Justine, you have returned then?” said Maud, her old self in a moment.

“Yees, mam’selle,” replied the *bonne*, with a strong foreign accent; “I have been to de shops, and since my return have sought mam’selle everywhere.”

"Isn't my new dress pretty, Justine?" said Maud, turning herself about for inspection.

"Ah! yees, it is indeed charming, ma petite, quite parfaite. Oh! dat monsieur, your papa, could see you now," replied Justine, throwing up her hands admiringly.

"I wish he would come back again," sighed Maud.

"He will do so some day, ma belle," replied the fond nurse; "and meanwhile you will grow beautiful and clever. Ah! cela me rappelle! Have you learned dat lesson Mees Clarke gave you dis morning?"

"No, I have not; it's too difficult, and I do not mean to learn it."

"Trop difficile!" exclaimed Justine, surprised out of English.

"Well, if you like, I don't choose to learn it."

"Ah! mam'selle, c'est incroyable! What will Mees Clarke say, I wonder?"

"We shall see, for I won't learn such horrid stuff. Voilà tout!" retorted Maud. "Do you know, Miss Castaine, why one should learn what one is sure to forget again directly?"

"I can't quite say I do," replied Kate, puzzled; "but I do know why we should do our duty and be obedient."

"Yes, yes; of course one must do that, or else I

suppose we shall not go to heaven ; but I'm not going to die yet, so, Justine, you may take the grammar and learn it yourself."

Finding the conversation had taken this unpleasant turn, Maud said good-bye to Kate, and went singing down the corridor, the lesson on her conscience.

"Oh, dear !" sighed Justine, folding up the new frock carefully, "dat is a dear child, Miss Castaine, but wat you call incorrigible."





CHAPTER III.

"I'M SO LONELY."

LADY LESLEY'S boudoir was the most delightful room in her handsome London house ; not, however, because of its prospect,—that was dull enough, and the common property of other apartments and neighbouring mansions. Its charm lay in its fittings and its pervading air of elegance and comfort combined. No expense had been spared in furnishing and arranging it ; the taste and luxurious ease of its owner had alone been consulted, and the result was charming. Almost every possible need, real or imaginary, had been anticipated and supplied. A fancy inlaid work-table stood in the window. A select library, in splendid bindings, was within easy reach. A Davenport was near at hand. The centre-table groaned beneath its treasures of art.

and popular literature, while a lovely *étagère* supported a case of exquisite stuffed birds. The couches and chairs of walnut-wood were softly cushioned with blue damask bordered with silver braid. Surely Lady Lesley must have been a happy woman ! But, unfortunately for her, happiness, true and lasting, does not lie in our surroundings, but in ourselves. Many a restless heart that throbs amidst luxury and splendour might envy the dweller in a hovel the peace which accompanies trust in God. With all her riches, Lady Lesley was still unpossessed of the Pearl of Great Price. She had never sought, and consequently never found it ; and it was a wrinkled, irritable old lady who lay languidly on a sofa, aimlessly watching the fire dart its rays into the farthest corners, and listening to the drip-drip of the rain on the window. A knock at the door, and Maud's voice saying, " May I come in, Aunt Lesley ? " aroused her.

" Yes, my dear, if you like," she answered, softly. Maud advanced on tiptoe, and lingering by the table, turned over the books as if seeking for something. After opening and shutting several, she gave an impatient sigh and sat down on the bearskin hearth-rug, seemingly to examine the gay flames pouring up the chimney, and glancing and dancing on the bright steel sides of their prison.

" My dear Maud, why don't you find something to

amuse yourself with?" remarked her aunt, after awhile. "It worries me almost as much to see you so listless as to hear you turning over my books and pictures."

Maud looked up with a pettish, discontented face, replying, "I have nothing to do, Aunt Lesley; I've looked at those books and plates until I'm sick of them, and of myself, and everything."

"Have you no work in hand?"

"I hate work. I always prick my fingers if I sew, and run the needle into them if I crochet; and if I tat, the cotton breaks. I wish I had something to do that could be done without trouble." And Maud sighed drearily, and resting her head on her hands, again stared into the fire.

"My dear," began Lady Lesley anew, "I am sorry for you, but I cannot help you, as nothing can be done in this world without fatigue and exertion. You are dull if you stay at home, and tired if you go out."

"Yes," replied Maud, decidedly. "I'd rather stay at home than go to parties. I'm sick of them; they're always the same—always Christmas-trees, and dancing with little boys, and eating cakes."

"Really, Maud, you are very difficult to please, and not right in speaking in such a manner of kindly-intended entertainments. Get up and seat yourself as

a lady, and don't let me hear you expressing yourself so again."

"Bother!" said Maud, under her breath, at the same time throwing herself into a soft chair. The creaking of the springs increased Lady Lesley's displeasure, and with unusual heat she exclaimed, "You had better retire to your own room, and I will desire Miss Clarke to give you longer lessons to study during the afternoons."

"Oh! please, aunt, don't do that—they are so long already," pleaded Maud, sitting up very erect and prim, in remembrance of the "horrid grammar" unlearned upstairs.

"Something must be done. And now leave me; I must rest awhile after all this excitement, or I shall be unable to attend the soirée this evening." And Lady Lesley waved her hand towards the door as she spoke, and closing her eyes, used her gold-capped smelling-bottle.

Dismissed from the boudoir, afraid of Justine and the conscience-haunted nursery, the little niece wandered along the passage undecided where to go. A short meditation sent her to find her cousins; but no help could she obtain from them. Frances, the elder, was in the drawing-room, deep in an absorbing novel, and was, Maud said to herself, "as cross as if she had the gout;" and the gentler Emmeline, tired out with the toils of the first season, was actually

fast asleep on a sofa, oblivious of everything. So Maud recommenced her travels, feeling more lonely, more miserable, and more out of tune than before. "Nobody wants me, nobody cares where I am, nor where I go. I do wish papa would come back and love me," cried the mournful young heart. Its owner concluded to take refuge in the library, as the gloomiest place she could think of, and as such, agreeable to her humour. She was quite right with regard to its gloominess. It was indeed even dismal. The fire was out, for the room was seldom used but as a schoolroom. The dark books looked down solemnly from the shadowy glass-fronted bookcases. There was everywhere a dreary indistinctness, through which the furniture appeared large and odd and grim. Some children would have preferred more light and English grammar to such a ghostly chamber, but Maud had no fears, and curled herself up in a deep reading-chair, preparatory to nursing her griefs. - It ended, as such sad reflections often do, in a sound nap, from which she awoke an hour or so later to see a figure in the doorway, standing out black against the light of the hall-lamp, and saying, in a perplexed sort of way—

"I wonder where dat child is? Mam'selle, are you here?"

"Yes, I am, Justine; what is it?" replied Maud, rubbing her eyes and sitting up.

"De nursery tea is ready, ma petite, and Mees Lena have come to take it wid you."

This joyful news finished the work the sleep had begun, and with recovered good-temper Maud sprang away upstairs like a fawn.

"Lena, dear, I am so glad you've come, for I'm so lonely I don't know what to do," she cried, running to her cousin and throwing her arms lovingly round her neck.

"Take care, pet," replied Lena, disengaging herself carefully; "Dawkins has just done my hair, and I don't want it spoiled."

"You're very pretty to-night, Lena, only I wouldn't have that curl caught up just there; you should let it hang full-length," said Maud, critically.

"Mam'selle is quite right," remarked Justine. "If Mees Lena will permit me, I will in one moment give her coiffure a little finish, which will make her de belle of de evening."

"Thanks, good Justine," said Lena, knowing of old that the Frenchwoman's artistic touches were not to be despised.

"Now you're lovely," cried Maud, whisking about and clapping her hands. "You're quite killing, as Dawkins said the other day. You're a sweet thing in Lenas."

"Nonsense, child," said the elder cousin, blushing

and smiling, and looking therefore, Maud thought, still lovelier.

"And how comes it you are lonely, pet?" asked Lena presently, as she warmed her dainty little feet and sipped a cup of tea.

"I don't know, but I am really—I'm so tired of being by myself."

"You have mamma, and Frances, and me," answered Lena, "besides Justine."

"Yes," responded Maud, slowly; "but aunt is so often shocked by what I say or do, it's no fun being with her; and Frances is so cross always; and you—well, Lena, you know, though you're a dear darling duck of a Lena, yet you're not up till I'm with Miss Clarke, and after luncheon you ride or drive or go to sleep till dinner-time, and then you go out again." And Maud's face added, "What can you say to that?"

"I'm not worth much as a playfellow, am I?" laughed Lena when Maud paused. "Well, you're quite right, and some day I'm going to stay at home. I'm getting overdone with all this gaiety. It is, after all, a very poor sort of life to lead. If it were not such a trouble to begin afresh I'd—well, never mind, Maudie," she continued, interrupting herself and laughing again uneasily; "it's great fun sometimes, though it does tire one; and very soon you'll grow up and come out, and have your turn to be gay while some one else is dull."

"No. I shan't," answered Maud, resolutely ; " I don't care for it. I'd like friends, but not the sort you have. They are not real somehow. They don't mean what they say, and it is wicked of people to say what is not true. I heard Captain Gray tell Frances, one day when he was calling, that her voice was finer than Miss Some-one else's ; and you know, and I know, and so does he, that Frances can't even sing in tune."

" Hush ! Maud ; you should not speak so," reproved Lena. " Gentlemen must be polite ; and Captain Gray did not say that Frances sang beautifully, only that she had a fine voice."

" It was a polite way of telling her that she screams then," said Maud, still hotly. " She did not understand him, at any rate, or she would not have looked so pleased."

" People must say something, and the bare truth might be very disagreeable," returned Lena, doubtfully.

" It is wrong to say what is not true," persisted Maud.

" Of course it is," assented Lena ; " but people who go to Rome must do as Rome does."

" Then I won't go to Rome, for I am not going to say what I don't think for any one," said Maud, tossing her dark hair over her shoulders.

" Well, good-bye, dearie ; there's the dinner-bell," ex-

claimed Lena, rising to go away after a farewell kiss from her cousin.

With many serious faults, Maud had one great virtue—that of a firm love of truth. She sincerely desired to be honest and true, and this desire often led her to be rather rude, for she was not able to discriminate justly, when to speak out frankly, and when to be silent.

Her young heart was yearning for some real love, something stronger and better than herself. All human beings have this craving—frequently it is life long. Some try to satisfy it by gaining and adoring gold; some by courting and receiving admiration; some by doing acts of benevolence, and winning the esteem and affection of their fellow creatures. There are numberless ways in which men strive to quiet this ray of Eden's sunlight which Adam brought away with him into exile, and which he has bequeathed to his children. But this sunbeam has lost its centre. There is but one Sun to which it belongs. Apart from that it can never rest, but is condemned to a weary search, half blinded by false centres, smouldering in a living death under piles of gold and admiration, and alas! even under those deeds which, although good in themselves, yet, springing from a debased motive, obtain their reward in self-exaltation, and can therefore afford no lasting home for the lost heavenly ray of the Sun of Righteousness. Little Maud, longing for sympathy,

thought of friends, yet was ignorant of that one Friend who can fill even to overflowing every human heart.

Lena sympathised with her cousin, and reflected much on what she had said. There were hours when her pleasure-seeking life did seem poor and mean. Self! self! self! was written over each day's page. As yet it was the selfishness of thoughtlessness and youth: as things were, she accepted them.

The falsities of society had at first jarred with her nature, but lately the text of her mind had not so often been "We must be true," as "We must be polite;" thus she gradually learned to laugh at empty compliments and gross flatteries. As she did not believe them, they seemed to her to be of no significance. Yet all the while the fine exquisite finish of the spirit she had brought with her out of the quiet Hollywood home into the wide hollow world was being insensibly rubbed away, and hearts were being soiled and hardened; for untruth of every kind and degree blackens and parches all it touches. Emmeline Lesley's conscience spoke loudly, still reminding her of vows unkept, of promises broken, of resolutions forgotten, and counsel unheeded. Again this evening Maud's words had roused it from its lair, and behind the pretty smiling face and be-muslined figure it questioned and tormented. Had she courage to leave the Rome she had jested about to Maud, and mounting the Alps in

spite of rocks and difficulties and dangers, to go across into another land? Could the feet which danced over the path of pleasure and self-indulgence carry her over ice and snow, through mist and fog, into the Fatherland? She could not tell.





CHAPTER IV.

ON THE STEAMBOAT.

THE tide was late, and the short February day had closed in darkly, while Jenks and his party were feasting. They hurried on along the busy streets to the crowded docks, where the English steamer lay alongside the landing-stage awaiting its passengers. Nell felt utterly bewildered; the ringing of bells, the shouting of sailors, the tramp of feet, the passing to and fro of oddly-dressed officials, were confusing and even alarming in the evening gloom, imperfectly enlivened by the gas lamps of the custom-houses and dockyards, and the waving lights of the spectral ship. Half pushed, half carried, she found herself on deck, and driven, stumbling and dizzy, towards the steerage cabin.

“Mind you stay here, and don’t come worriting me,

Nell," screamed Moll, plunging her down on a seat, and leaving her with a farewell shake. At first Nell was too frightened even to look up, but by and by her senses recovered themselves, and she peeped about her curiously. The cabin was neither cheerful nor particularly comfortable, but she was used to hard fare, and it was a shelter, and not a cold one either.

Having considered her night's lodgings, she next observed her companions. There were only two as yet, a woman already in a berth, and another with twin babies sitting not far from herself. The noise and excitement of the starting had disturbed one infant, and it cried and wailed piteously in spite of all the efforts of its mother to quiet it. Happily the second slept, wrapt up in a shawl close by. Nell watched her neighbour earnestly as she rocked and hushed the fractious baby, holding it now this way, now that, ever and anon casting anxious glances at the other, fearful lest the movement of the vessel just started should awaken it. All her care and soothing were in vain, the tears rolled swiftly over the dimpled cheeks, and would not be stopped. Worn out and losing patience, the mother at length let it lie helplessly on her lap, only giving it an occasional jog. To make matters worse, the babe which had hitherto slept grew restless, woke up, and at once joined its twin brother in full chorus of sympathy. The poor woman looked

round distractedly, and Nell saw, as the rays of the swinging lamp fell upon her, that she was very pale, and that her eyes were red with weeping.

"Stop that there squalling," shouted a rough sailor passing the entrance. Large burning tears gathered and fell heavily on her rusty black dress as she caught up both the crying children and pressed them passionately to her heart. Others might scowl and hate, her own courage might fail, but her love for them never. Patience, poor mother! though your husband lies peacefully in a foreign grave, and you are left to fight the world alone and weak, you are not deserted. Earth moans and weeps, but Heaven is overhead. Who was the messenger of help?

A few feet distant a stern struggle had been going on. Somewhere Nell had heard that babies might be sung to sleep. She could sing; should she try? "She was tired and she was little," said self. "But she's unhappy and crying, oh, so quietly! and perhaps she'd love me if I tried," argued the *real* Nell. Over and over again she considered it; once she half rose, yet dared not advance. But when the sailor spoke she could bear it no longer, and, jumping up, she steadied herself, and made the first step in the path of charity. She could give neither money nor counsel, but two small arms were willing to bear, and a sweet voice was ready to sing. Of what she had she gave

freely, with a child's simplicity, hoping only to win a little love.

"I can sing," she said, timidly regarding the sad face turned towards her; "I'll try and sing one of your babies to sleep."

Much astonished, the woman made no answer, and Nell said again—

"I'll be very good to it, if I may."

"You're a kind little girl, that you are," said the woman, unwilling to refuse, yet hesitating to accept the offer. "You're such a mite," she continued, "I'm afraid you can't hold one."

"Oh, yes, I can; please let me try;" and Nell put out her hands, and looked so beseechingly, that the mother yielded, and gave her one of the still crying infants. Carefully and tenderly she held it. In her wanderings she had seen many mothers nursing their children, and had often, ah! very often, wished some one would so nurse her. The woman told her to sit near her in a snug corner, and pushed a basket beneath her feet. Then Nell commenced her songs. Little common ballads they were, scarcely understood by the singer, but the voice was the charm. Fainter by degrees became the wailing, then ceased, and only tiny sobs at intervals told how sadly those baby hearts had been distressed; and Nell sang on until even these had stopped, and all was peace again. Not

only the nurslings, but their mother, had been calmed by the clear dove-like sounds. She did not speak, & Nell did not, but fell thinking as she had never thought before. The infant's small round head rested on her shoulder, and a chubby hand, escaped from its coverings, was stretched out round her neck.

"I wonder if it loves me," thought she, and all at once a sense of her utter loneliness swept over her like a great sorrowful wave. Who was she? Where did she come from? No instinct bound her to Jenks or Molly. Her heart wandered back through all she could recall of eight years. No friend answered; it seemed as though she had neither given nor received that precious gift of love. "Nobody cares for me, nobody loves me, but, perhaps, this little baby;" and, defying control, her grief vented itself in a low moan.

Poor little wanderer! only eight years old, yet friendless, suffering the keenest woe of poor mortality!

"Are you tired, dear? Will you lay the baby down?" asked the mother kindly, having but imperfectly heard the cry.

"Oh, no, no, no!" replied Nell vehemently, clasping more tightly the darling bundle. "Oh, please don't take it away."

"Indeed I won't, for I'm only too glad you can hold him so nicely, if your arms don't ache."

"I don't mind that a bit, for it seems to love me, the dear little baby!" replied Nell.

"Indeed, and I don't wonder," answered her companion. "Who could help loving such a kind little soul, with such a pretty voice? I'm sure I shall never forget ye, if I live to be a hundred, and I'll always pray for ye with my own."

"Pray for me?" repeated Nell, questioningly.

"Why, yes; you know what I mean, don't you?"

"No I don't," said Nell, shaking her head.

"Poor child! Why, I mean I'll ask the Lord to bless you and take care on you, and reward you for being so good to me."

"Is it the king you'll ask?" inquired Nell, puzzled.

"The King? Yes, surely; the King of kings, the Lord; Him as made the world, and you and me, and the babies, and the sea, and everything."

"Where does He live?" asked Nell.

"Up in heaven," replied the woman solemnly, pointing upwards.

"Heaven!" repeated Nell, thoughtfully, as if trying to recollect something. "I think I heard of heaven when I was little; but I can't ever remember things that happened then."

"Why can't you? How old are you?" asked the woman.

"Aunt Moll says I am eight; but I don't know

why I can't remember. I used to see beautiful things sometimes. She says I dreamt them when I was ill years ago."

"Well, what else? Whose little girl are you?"

"No one's. I'm Nell, and I go about and sing for Aunt Moll and Uncle Bill. Mother died long ago somewhere where we're going to."

The woman looked compassionately at the sick girl, almost old, face at her side; but before she could ask anything else, Nell continued—

"How did you say you would ask the King to be kind to me?"

"I said I'd pray to Him up in heaven. He hears all good; He lets poor people speak to Him. Poverty and sorrow don't make no difference to Him, though He's Lord of all."

"But if He's so great and kind, why don't they help us and make us happy?" asked the wayward child.

"So He does, and so He will," rejoined the woman, quickly and earnestly; "and hasn't He done now, this very night. When you jumped up and ran to take baby there, wasn't I saying in my heart, 'Help me, Lord, for Jesus' sake?'"

"But where is He that He heard? He's not here; I can't see Him;" and Nell peered all round the gloomy cabin.

"We can't see Him ; but He's here for all that, and told you to help me when I prayed."

Nell shivered, and sighing deeply, said—"I can't understand."

"Bless you, dear ! no more can't I ; but I know He does hear us, for He promised He would."

For a while the singer sat silent, trying to comprehend what she had heard. But another thought was in her mind ; the baby hand upon her neck pressed it in ; so presently she asked, with eager hesitation—

"Does He !—oh ! does He love us ?—that great King as He is, so kind ?"

"Ay ! that He does," was the woman's instant reply. "Didn't He send' Jesus Christ, His only Son, to live amongst us, and die for us ? It do seem strange at times why we are troubled and tried, but it's all right somehow, and good for us ; and when we go to live with Him, sure we shan't care how we toiled and suffered here, we shall be so happy then. Ay ! He loves us, sure enough. Don't you have any one to love you ?" she added, tenderly.

"No," said Nell, with a catch in her breath. "Nobody cares for me, and I don't care for nobody except the babies and you ; and so—and so—I should like if the King does, though I don't know who He is. It wouldn't be quite like having nobody ;" and the tears would come, and that pitiful cry, which this

time went straight to the mother's heart ; but the tiny hand consoled Nell, and she was soon quiet again.

"Poor darling !" sighed the woman, and tenderly she drew the child closer to her with her free arm. "Listen, dearie. I am only a poor unlearned woman, and not fit to be teacher, but I'll help ye all I can ; what I'll tell ye will comfort ye if anything will. Well, a long time ago, this King, the great Lord God, made the earth and everything on it. He made it all good, but it didn't stay so. The men and women got to be wicked and bad ; they forgot their King could always hear and see them, and how He had said that if they did wrong they should die, and be sent away where they could never be happy again. Lots of people forgot this, and lots more wouldn't believe it was true ; but it was, and as all were wicked, all were to be punished."

"How dreadful !" exclaimed Nell, much interested.

"Yes, it was dreadful, indeed ; and I don't know what we should have done if the King hadn't been full of love and pity, and willing to save us in spite of it all."

"What did He do ?" asked Nell.

"Well, He meant what He'd said, and He couldn't break His word. Either every one in the world

must die and be shut out of heaven, or else some one who was quite good must die instead of them. Now, the King had one Son, whom He loved more than you or I can think ; but to save all of us, men and women, He sent Him down from heaven to live on earth amongst the people alive then ; and the Son was glad to come and save us, though He had to leave His Father and the holy angels, and His happy Home, and knew He'd have to suffer terribly for a long while, for He loved us as much as the King. So He came one Christmas night, as a little baby like these we're nursing now, and He was called Jesus the Saviour. He was very poor, and had to work as a carpenter until He was a grown man ; then He began to go about the country and tell the people about His Father, and how He would forgive them and make them good, and even let them live with Him and be happy for ever, if they would really believe that He was the King's Son, and be sorry for their sins. But oh ! Nell, they wouldn't, and instead of loving Him they hated Him, and at last they killed Him !"

" Killed Him !" echoed Nell, with trembling lips and awed voice.

" Yes, they killed Him ! and He'd given up everything for them, and loved them, and healed and comforted, and fed them, and never done a wrong thing,

or said a wrong word all His life. I can't tell you all He did ; but He came loving them, and He died loving them. The bad men wouldn't believe Him, so they beat Him and laughed at Him, and then nailed him to a great cross of wood. And He let them do it all, because the King had said that only His blood could wash away sin, and make any one fit to live with Him."

"And will it wash us?" asked Nell, "or was it only the people who lived then?"

"Jesus died for everybody who ever did live or ever will," replied the woman ; "for you and for me ; and if we believe on Him, and ask Him, He will wash away all we have done wrong, and His Father will forgive us for His sake, and take us to heaven when we die."

"But I'm so little," said Nell.

"That don't matter. Jesus loved children, and took them up and blessed them when He was on earth, and He's just the same now, the Bible says."

"Then He didn't stay in the ground?" said Nell.

"Oh ! no ; I didn't tell you that. He only stayed there three days, then He came back, and saw and talked with His friends ; and one day, while they were with Him on a green hill-side, He went away up through the clouds to the King, His Father!"

"Then some one did love Him even then?" and

Nell drew a long breath of relief, for the ingratitude of the world had weighed upon her.

"A few did," replied her teacher; "but when the bad men nailed Him to the cross, His friends were frightened, and left Him to suffer alone—as lonely as you say you are."

"Ah!" sighed Nell, "then He knows all about it;" and the little street-singer thought of the deserted King's Son, and was comforted.

The woman saw the brightening of her face, and said, contentedly—

"I guessed that would help you, dear; I knew you'd feel better when you'd heard how He loves us—both you and me."

"But if He loves us so, why don't He take us away and make us happy? I'd like to go," persisted Nell.

"I don't rightly know," was the woman's reply; "but it's all right. I suppose we have to show Him we believe and love Him by living good lives, and being patient and honest and kind, like He was. As to the troubles and sorrow, He'll carry us through them, and make us happy in the end, because He loves us. Yes, I am quite sure of that."

As she spoke, the woman looked so solemn, and her gentle eyes seemed to gaze so far away, that Nell felt herself forgotten, and did not dare to speak again.

Thus silence fell upon them. The steamer rocked and groaned, and puffed on its way through the great grey waves in the darkness ; but Nell felt no fear ; the words she had heard had stilled her longings, as her voice had charmed the babies ; so, seated in the warm corner, she thought about it all, and, by and by, fell fast asleep, smiling and murmuring in her pleasant dreams, " He loves us, yes, I'm sure of that." Half roused a while after, she felt some one, certainly not Moll, lift her up and lay her in a berth. Happy indeed was that winter night, and the succeeding day was, if possible, still happier, for Moll was too ill to stir, and knowing her safe, took no notice of her whatever, leaving her, as she supposed, to the care of Bill ; but, as he was busily occupied with two or three other rough men, Nell gladly undertook to look after herself, and did so by keeping close to her new friend. The latter generously shared with her the small store of provisions she had put up for herself, and was more than repaid by Nell's care of the babies, who laughed and crowed in exceeding good-humour after their stormy evening, until, tired out, they both took a late afternoon nap. Then Nell seated herself near their mother, and had another long talk, hearing from her more good words, and telling her what she could of her own history. Many things about Nell puzzled the good woman greatly.

Most of all she was surprised by the little girl's manner, and her pretty easy chatter, so different from what might have been expected from a niece of Jenks and Moll. But as no questions could clear the mystery, Mrs Bray (as she told Nell she was called) was forced to let it rest.

"You'll not forget me, Nell, will you?" she said, as they steamed nearer and nearer the London wharf, where they would have to part.

"Indeed I won't. I'll never forget you, nor what you have told me," answered Nell, stroking Mrs Bray's hand softly with her small one. "I'll try and be good, and then, may be, the King'll make me happy some day."

"And if ever you come to Northampton, you're to ask at the railway station for Mrs Bray. I've a brother-in-law a porter there, and he'll bring you to me.

Nell nodded, and repeated Northampton several times, to learn it.

"I'm going to my mother; she lives there, and will help to take care of the babies, bless 'em;" and the mother kissed each one as they slumbered.

"We'll be in in half-an-hour now," said a passing sailor, with whom they had become acquainted during the day.

"Oh, dear! what'll I do when you're gone? I wish I was going with you, I do," sighed Nell. "Doesn't

it look big and dark over there? The houses will swallow us up, and I'll never see you again."

"I wish you could come with me; we'd get along somehow; but I don't think your uncle and aunt would let me have you."

Nell's tears were dropping fast over the kind hard-working hand she held; she said nothing.

"Don't cry, dearie; you'll see something nice'll happen soon, if you're a good girl; don't cry so."

"What are you a-saying to my gall?" said Moll, sharply, and so suddenly that Nell started to her feet in terror.

"Little Nell and I are sorry to part," replied Mrs Bray, quietly. "She's been very kind and useful to me, and I've been asking her to come and see me at Northampton."

"Humph! Nell don't have much time to go visiting; she has to earn her living," returned Moll, sullenly glowering at the child.

"She isn't your daughter, is she?" inquired the other woman, curiously.

"It isn't your bisnis who she is; she's no concern o' yourn, as I know of," said Moll, still more fiercely, while Nell trembled from head to feet.

"No, of course not," replied her friend, as if indifferent; "only there's something odd about her; so thinks I, maybe she's got a history."

"Oh, it's gossip you want, is it?" rejoined Moll, contemptuously, adding, as she seized Nell's arm, "Tell her who you are, Nell, so as there'll be no mistake."

With scared eyes and blanched lips, Nell looked up fearfully at her captor, and said, as she had been taught—"Mother was your sister, and died long ago, and now I belong to you."

"Very well, so I'm yer Aunt Moll, d'ye hear?" and Moll accompanied her words by a violent grip, for sea-sickness had not improved her temper.

"Yes," replied the child obediently, but with none of the alacrity she had shown in speaking to Mrs Bray.

"Here we are—come along," interrupted Bill, nudging his wife.

Bursting into a passion of grief, Nell cast herself on her friend, sobbing out—"Oh, don't let them have me! Take me with you—oh! take me with you."

While she implored protection, the steamer stopped, and the board was thrown across from the platform. With an oath, Moll caught up the screaming girl in her arms, and putting a hand over her mouth, darted after her husband, who was already ashore. In the bustle and seeming confusion of the landing they were speedily lost, but a few words of Mrs Bray's were still audible in Moll's ears—"We shall see whose business little Nell is."

"We'd ha' done better to ha' stayed on t'other side of the water, Bill," she remarked, telling him as they walked along, "I warn't ye she'd get us into trouble right off."

"Wall ! it ain't no sort o' use to make a shine about it. I couldn't abide them furiners no longer, so there ! And as to the little gal, we can lend her out for a year or two easy."





CHAPTER V.

THE VICTORY OF FORGIVENESS.

THREE hours of it—three long hours, cramming and scolding, scolding and cramming,” muttered Maud, slowly entering the library one cloudy morning.

Miss Clarke was already there, and waiting. She was a lady of thirty or forty, tall, thin, and dignified. Some slender clever-looking curls hung about her face, which, though far from plain, had a stony expression.

This, together with her stately manner and never-failing propriety, were to Maud like flint to steel. The little pupil's ardent, passionate nature dashed itself against the chill quietude of the governess, striking endless sparks of irritation, but raising no flame of sympathy or affection. Her small overtures of friendship having been unconsciously repulsed by Miss

Clarke, who was more head than heart, Maud's pride took fire, and made her heartily dislike her teacher, a serious misfortune for both. Miss Clarke thus lost the sole influence her pupil as yet acknowledged ; the latter, her wish to please and succeed. She went through her studies, therefore, as fast or as slowly as seemed 'convenient at the minute, being sometimes daring and impertinent, sometimes obstinate and indifferent.

"Good morning, Miss Clarke," she said, seating herself at the table, adorned by its paraphernalia of inkstand, books, etc.

"Good morning, Maud. I trust you are well prepared to-day," was Miss Clarke's battle-cry.

Up jumped Maud's naughty, wilful temper, and she answered, rather defiantly, "I haven't learned those adverbs."

"And your reason for not doing so?" inquired the governess.

Maud hesitated, and then said—"I didn't want, and I didn't see why they need be learned, when I couldn't remember them."

"Even a parrot can recollect what it once learns," remarked Miss Clarke, sarcastically.

Not knowing what to say in answer, Maud shrugged her shoulders and raised her eyebrows despairingly, a manœuvre which diverted attention from the gram-

mar, and brought down upon her a lecture on want of tone and good breeding.

"Have you no wish to be considered a lady, and to act as becomes one?" she at length concluded.

"I don't think I have," replied Maud, with provoking indifference. "I don't think I care a bit what people consider me; besides, it doesn't matter, for papa has heaps of money, and nobody minds what rich people say or do."

"Be silent, Maud, and do not speak so foolishly. Wealth does not constitute true gentility, nor do grand clothes make a lady," replied Miss Clarke. "To be rude is as blamable in one rank as in another. A real lady—a gentlewoman such as I desire to see you—ought never to be uncourteous, and certainly ought never to express any feeling by awkward and ungraceful habits, such as I have reprovèd in you." Receiving no answer, Miss Clarke continued, "Where is your grammar, Maud? You must commit those adverbs to memory without loss of time."

Very reluctantly the little girl found the book, and still more unwillingly the place.

"The regular course of study must be suspended until this lesson be learned," said the governess, taking up her work, and resting serenely in her comfortable chair.

As for Maud, she sat leaning over the unfortunate

pages, thinking how ugly and hard the words were, as they came one after another, and setting herself against them so firmly that she would have to master not only a long dry list, but her own self ; and a very desperate fight it threatened to be, for Maud's self was a determined one, and rapidly becoming a very Goliath for want of opposition. Half-an-hour passed quickly to one, slowly to the other.

"Are you ready yet?" asked the one.

"Not yet," sullenly answered the other.

Another half-hour slipped away rapidly to both. Miss Clarke had tatted nearly an eighth of a yard, and Maud had counted all the letters in the task.

"Two hundred and fifty-five letters, one hundred and fourteen vowels, and one hundred and forty-one consonants ! No wonder I can't learn it," said Maud to the bad self.

"I do not know how long you intend to be, but we shall remain here until you are prepared," remarked Miss Clarke, with exasperating tranquillity, as noon approached.

"Ah!" thought Maud; "but it will be half-past twelve soon now, and then we shall see who'll hold out the longest."

Quietly the clock ticked on ; the long hand reached the three, then the six, and Maud had not even attempted to learn the lesson. The tiny hammer struck

once, and Miss Clarke rose, asked if it were finished, and being answered in the negative, reseated herself, and taking some paper from the inkstand drawer, wrote a note.

"Take that to Lady Lesley or Miss Lesley immediately if you please," she said to the maid who answered the schoolroom bell; then finding an interesting volume, she drew her chair towards the fire and commenced reading.

"Whatever has she been writing, I wonder?" Maud questioned, with a little qualm; but she was too obstinate to yield yet. Curiosity helped her; and what with speculations as to the contents of the note and Miss Clarke's intentions, one o'clock arrived, and shortly after the maid to make preparations for dinner.

"You can move to that side-table, Maud," said Miss Clarke.

Surprised and indignant, Maud did so. This was a dilemma equally disagreeable and unexpected. The Hollywood governess was of the easy class, and Maud had had her own way almost always, so that this proceeding on Miss Clarke's part was novel. She made energetic signs to the servant to explain matters, guessing but too truly what she would say.

"Lady Lesley is out driving with Miss Emmeline, but Miss Lesley desired me to lay dinner for you and Miss Maud here, and to ask you for orders, ma'am."

Miss Clarke slightly inclined her head, saying, "Very well," and resumed her book.

Maud now felt like a fly in a spider's web. Between her governess and elder cousin she could hope for no mercy ; and tired and vexed with herself, her anger suddenly blazed up, and flinging the grammar on the floor, she said for the first time, "I won't learn it." Pride alone prevented her from bursting into tears ; her eyes tingled, and her throat burned with suppressing them. On hearing the noise, Miss Clarke glanced from the angry child to the book, but she turned away again without speaking, thinking she would not risk her authority any farther by a fresh command. Maud showed no signs of relenting ; her little hands were tightly clasped together, her lips set close, her whole expression betraying how the evil in her was raging and surging. Miss Clarke partook of the dinner in silence ; Maud would take none, and sat in a white heat, very naughty and very unhappy.

At length the governess returned to the fire, the cloth was removed, and in the silence which followed, the ticking of the clock and the crackling of the fire sounded loudly.

After awhile Maud rested her aching head on her hands and shed a few tears, the heralds of the thunderstorm. Slightly faint for want of food, physically conquered, her eyelids fell and fell, until, had Miss

Clarke been less absorbed in her reading, she would have discovered her refractory pupil quietly asleep over the table. She must have been so an hour or more, when, waking up, she found Lena kneeling beside her.

"Poor pet, poor darling!" she said, drawing Maud towards her, and softly pushing back her shining hair.

The loving tones, the sympathy, melted the child at once, and she threw her arms round her cousin, sobbing convulsively.

"I cannot permit this interference, Miss Emmeline. Maud has been an extremely naughty girl," said Miss Clarke, rising, much displeased.

"Never mind, Miss Clarke; you will forgive her this time, won't you?" pleaded Lena, who knew nothing about discipline.

"I cannot," replied the governess, gravely relating the events of the morning.

"You have been naughty, Maudie, indeed you have; and you are sorry now, are you not, darling?" said Lena, with tender reproof in her voice. "You'll learn the lesson for to-morrow, will you not? if Miss Clarke will be so very kind as to let you. Say you will, pet, and Lena will help you to learn it," she whispered.

"Oh! you dear Lena! you dear! you dear!" sobbed Maud. "I'd learn all the page for you, yes, I would."

"Hush! say you'll learn it, and repeat it to Miss Clarke to-morrow morning, and then you shall come

with me. Think, dear, how naughty and troublesome you've been, and how you have kept Miss Clarke waiting here since half-past twelve."

"Yes, I'll learn it," answered Maud, glancing up penitently at Miss Clarke, who looked very stately and cold.

"This is bribery, Miss Emmeline, and Maud must understand that, if I yield so far, it is quite against my rules, and only because you make the request."

"Thank you, Miss Clarke. You are very kind, and I am sorry you have been so grieved, but I don't think it will happen again," replied Lena, with a smile which thawed even the governess, and made her fancy that perhaps, after all, she had not been judicious in her way of meeting Maud's temper. "Pick up the book, dear, and we'll learn it in no time you'll see," said Lena.

Maud obeyed, and bidding a tearful good-bye to Miss Clarke, followed Lena upstairs.

So the battle was for the present a drawn one. Neither side could quite claim a victory. Who would win in the end? A long talk had the cousins that afternoon in the nursery—a long, serious talk. They dearly loved one another, having spent a large part of the three years of Maud's visit together. Naturally sweet-tempered, Lena, in spite of her coaxing, had been shocked by what had occurred. She saw the ugliness

of self-will, and some of its sin. But before proceeding further, we must go back a little in the history of the Lesley family.

Lady Lesley, an elder sister of Maud's father, had married, some twenty-five or six years before our story began, a country gentleman, who, to her delight, was subsequently knighted for some public benefit conferred by him upon his native town. After his death, Lady Lesley remained at her residence, Hollywood, with her daughters, Frances and Emmeline, the only survivors of a large family, fitting them diligently for the time when she might carry them upon her maternal wings into the fashionable world. Frances being several years her sister's senior, was the first to be presented, and during her annual flights to the city, Lena stayed contentedly at home, having Maud for a playmate and pet.

She was always a gentle, amiable girl, and a great favourite with the old clergyman of the parish, who prepared her carefully for confirmation, hoping that she might thus be strengthened to resist the vanities and fascinations which had overcome Frances.

Alas! for Lena—self-confident, tired of the country, and dazzled by her sister's tales of town pleasures, she too was drawn into the whirlpool of fashion. It was not what she had expected; the tinsel was not so bright, nor were the people so agreeable. A secret convic-

tion burned within her that she had been created for something higher and nobler than to dance, and shop, and idle. She had intended to do more when she left the shelter of Hollywood. But who keeps these intentions? Very few, if any. Lena did not, could not, for she was not robust, and lately a sad languor had been creeping over her, a moral fog arising out of physical weariness, in which good thoughts and desires and impulses were in danger of being stifled. But her better nature was not yet beaten down ; again and again it asserted itself—more forcibly now than ever, as she sat talking to Maud of her misdeeds. She strove to recall her old friend's teaching when she spoke of how wrong it was to be angry and wilful and disobedient.

"But I can't bear Miss Clarke," responded Maud, hopelessly.

"You know, pet, we ought to obey those placed over us, whether we like them or not. You may not think Miss Clarke very pleasant, but she is conscientious and clever, and would very likely be much nicer if you did not try her so much. I dare say it is generally your fault when she is cross and disagreeable as you say."

"Yes," assented Maud, when her cousin paused for a confession ; "but if I'm good, she never praises me, nor seems to care."

"We shouldn't do right to be praised, but to please God."

Lena began to feel not a little hypocritical and conscience-stricken. What was she, that she should preach to even a child?

Maud looked up earnestly, without a suspicion of her cousin's feelings, to say, "Do you really think God cares what we do? I mean, do you think He notices the little things as well as the big ones?"

"I am sure of it, Maud, though I am afraid I've been forgetful of it," replied Lena, very gravely and sorrowfully. "My darling child," she added, impulsively, a minute after, "I cannot scold you, for I am wrong myself. You have been rude and obstinate and naughty, but I am far, far worse."

"Don't cry, Lena, dear," whispered Maud, softly, seeing her cousin's distress. "You are not wicked, I'm sure."

Lena shook her head; and, as Maud sat by her, she began to think, that if Lena, who seemed to her almost perfection, was wicked, how very, very bad must she be herself, and how fearfully angry God must be, if He had really marked everything she had done and said and thought during that long day. If He had, and if He only loved and took care of good people, what would become of her? How terrible it would be if He left her to herself, and never loved her any more, nor took

much easier than to confess them to an offended fellow-creature ; and Maud found also, that although acknowledging herself in the wrong, there yet remained a great mountain of pride in her wayward heart, and much hardness towards Miss Clarke. But strong for good as for evil, she made up her mind to do it, since Lena said it was right. That night she really prayed when she knelt down beside her pretty bed ; she really asked to be forgiven ; and really desired to keep the multitude of resolutions which passed through her mind before she slept.

Half-past nine came only too soon next morning, and from her favourite post on the stairs Maud watched Miss Clarke enter the schoolroom ere she ventured to follow. She had resolved to make the apology at once, but her courage failed. "I'll say the adverbs first," said she to herself. After a successful repetition, she cleared her throat to begin, when Miss Clarke spoke of another lesson, and persuading herself that the apology was not needful just then, the little girl put it off until the three hours were over. But the longer we delay doing right, the harder it becomes to do it at all. So it was with Maud. The governess, feeling she had a right to be displeased, and requiring some word of contrition, showed neither sympathy nor compassion ; and Maud, unused to humbling herself, and too confident in her own good

intentions, had not power to fight her enemy unassisted. Instead of expressing her sorrow, therefore, after an ineffectual effort, she turned away and scampered up to her little room. Lena, who, in her love and pity, was awaiting her arrival in the nursery, heard the adjoining bedroom door close hastily, and anxious to know the course of events, went to her. Half on the bed, and half off, lay the poor child in an agony of shame and grief.

"Don't ask me about it, Lena," she cried. "I didn't do it—I couldn't. I didn't feel a scrap sorry, after all, when I saw her. She didn't give me a bit of help either, Lena; and I meant to be so good, and now I've failed, first thing. I know I ought to be sorry and beg pardon, and I'd made up my mind so hard, and you wished it too, Lena. Oh! I am so sorry for that!" And here Maud's broken sentences ended in hopeless tears.

"Dear pet, you'll try again to-morrow, won't you? and you'll remember that God wishes it, and do it for Him, not for me. But wait here, and I'll come back directly," she added, a sudden thought striking her as a door opened on the floor below. "Miss Clarke," she exclaimed, arresting her as she descended to the hall ready for her walk home. "Will you give me a moment, please?"

"Certainly," replied Miss Clarke, listening gravely

while Lena in a few rapid words described her cousin's state of mind.

"Do you think," she concluded, "that it would be too much to come and speak to her? I do believe you would conquer her at once and for ever if you wouldn't mind making a little advance."

The governess hesitated. She was a strict disciplinarian. All the rights were on her side. She had yielded much yesterday, and not only was she unwilling to risk her dignity in going to Maud, but she did not feel quite sure of its being wise to do so.

"Miss Clarke," pleaded Lena again, "she is trying to be good, and it is very hard just at the beginning. Won't you help the child? she has such a warm, generous heart."

Not even Miss Clarke could resist the prayer of those beautiful soft eyes and earnest tones.

"I doubt the wisdom of your plan, but I cannot refuse," she said.

The younger lady seized and pressed her hand gratefully.

"Go in," she whispered, as they stood together at Maud's door.

She was still crying sadly, and her sobs and the forlornness of her attitude touched Miss Clarke. She laid a hand gently on the bowed head, saying—



'She laid a hand gently on the bowed head, saying—"I heard you were sorry, Maud, and I have come to forgive you."'—A NEEDLE AND THREAD, page 63.

"I heard you were sorry, Maud, and I have come to forgive you."

Crimson with surprise, Maud sprang to her feet. Her teacher's manner was quiet as usual, but the desire to be kind had awakened a new feeling towards her pupil which betrayed itself in every feature.

In an instant the child appreciated the favour done her. There was no rebellion, no distrust, no pride, in the voice which cried—

"Oh! Miss Clarke, forgive me. I have been very naughty and rude and selfish; but you have made me more sorry than I can tell. Oh! please forgive me."

"I do, my dear, most heartily," replied Miss Clarke, taking her penitent rebel in her arms and kissing her.

Thus was the victory won and peace proclaimed. Maud never forgot that scene. No reproof, no discipline, no punishment, could ever have vanquished her worst nature as did that appeal of free forgiveness to the really noble in her. No apparent coldness in Miss Clarke chilled after that her ardour and affection, and not even to Lena did she yield truer love or readier obedience.

But the blessing is for the peacemaker!



CHAPTER VI.

"I SHALL NEVER BE GOOD!"

"**H**ERE they are at last," exclaimed our impetuous friend Maud, catching sight of a carriage with luggage on the top driving up to Lady Lesley's front door. "Oh, Lily and Godfrey! I'm so glad you are come, so awfully glad, I cannot tell you," she gasped, breathless with a perilous rush to the hall to meet and welcome them. "I've been watching for you for hours, and began thinking something had happened. But come along and see Aunt Lesley. Justine and Nurse Graham will see to your boxes."

Laughing and chattering, she led her two young visitors into the drawing-room.

"I am much pleased to see you, my dears. I trust your mamma is well, and your papa better," said Lady Lesley, kindly.

"Mamma is quite well, thank you, Lady Lesley, and wished me to give you her love," answered Lillas; "but papa is very ill to-day," she added, a shadow flitting over her pleasant face.

Lady Lesley looked greatly concerned, and the children crossed the room to speak to Frances, who was seated at the piano.

"Now let us go and find Lena," said Maud, after they had kissed the young lady's carelessly offered cheek and answered a few formal questions. "Now let us go and find Lena."

Lena's welcome was all that her little cousin expected, and dispelled by its warmth the chill of the drawing-room.

Maud and her guests then went on to the nursery, as happy and as merry as possible.

There, talking to Justine, and already commencing the business of unpacking, they found Nurse Graham, a motherly looking old woman, with silvery grey hair beneath a plain white net cap. She curtsied with old-fashioned dignity and courtesy to Maud, who immediately threw her arms round her neck and embraced her heartily. Nurse Graham was one of Maud's favourites. The greeting over, Maud proposed to show Lily and Godfrey their respective chambers.

"This one, of course, is chiefly for play; and this is

the dressing-room, where Godfrey is to sleep, next to Nurse Graham, in there, so that she may be within call," she explained, passing from the nursery into an adjoining room. "And you and I, Lily, are to be together in here ; won't it be capital ?" concluded she pointing to two little twin-beds, with snowy drapery.

"It is nice, Maud ; how charming it will be !" said Lily, while Godfrey clapped his hands and jumped for joy.

Lilias Danvers was rather more than a year younger than Maud Knollis ; but being of a more tranquil nature, was quite fitted to be her companion.

The friendship had arisen somewhat suddenly between the two girls, but it seemed likely to last, and probably be beneficial to both. Lily was becoming too sedate and quiet for her age in the London rectory, and needed some of Maud's gaiety and sprightliness ; while the latter, on the other hand was sadly deficient in the steadiness which characterised her little friend. What Godfrey was it would be hard to tell—how dear ! how quaint how winning ! with his wealth of brown locks and ever-changeable face, his ringing voice and odd sayings

Mr Danvers, their father, was rector of the parish in which Lady Lesley resided. He was a studious delicate man, not strong enough for the toils of his profession, although eminently qualified as a preacher

and consoler. Behind and beyond the great squares and imposing front houses were dwellings teeming with human beings, needing love, care, sympathy, and Christian teaching and patience. Mr Danvers strove to tend well all his flock, but his tenderest yearnings were over the lost sheep; and in spite of the help afforded by his curate, Mr Davids, and many other devoted labourers, his zeal overtasked his strength, and brought on an illness which threatened to last for life.

The timely offer of an old college friend to take charge of his parish during his absence, induced him at length to try what change of air and complete rest would do towards his recovery. Just as preparations were being made for a visit to the south coast, Mrs Danvers received an invitation from Lady Lesley for Lilius and Godfrey to join Maud for a few weeks; and wishful to give her whole time and attention to her husband, she readily accepted it. Giving them, therefore, into the care of faithful Nurse Graham, their parents bid them God speed, and sent them forth with a blessing. They had trained them carefully, striving to encourage in them every right thought and impulse, and were not now unwilling that they should for a short time test the power of the principles which they had been taught.

During the first week of their stay, Lady Lesley

had begged Miss Clarke to give Maud a holiday. After that time, lessons were to be resumed for two hours and a-half daily ; and Miss Clarke, who knew the Danvers, kindly offered to teach all three together. This arrangement was considered delightful by the children—that is, as delightful as any could be which meant school—and added a fresh zest to the play of the present. All of them had the usual capacity for romping and fun, and frequently made the solemn library resound with laughter and mirth. One afternoon, being quite wearied, a truce to play was unanimously voted and carried. With a long breath of mingled fatigue and pleasure, Maud flung herself on a sofa, and Lily, in a quieter manner, followed her example. Godfrey clambered into a reading-chair, and clasping his hands on his bosom, leaned back as though giving himself up to meditation. It was, however, of an interrupted character, owing to his earnest efforts to rest an elbow on each arm of the chair—a feat he found difficult to accomplish, with limbs as short as his ; for first one and then the other slipped off, demolishing his dignity, and jerking him to the tips of his small, booted feet, which stood erect in front of him, with unconscious pertness. A laugh from the two girls convinced him of his inability even to mimic papa ; so, coming down from his throne, he chose a more congenial resting-place on the hearth-

rug, where he lay, his head on his hands and his heels in the air, listening to the chatter of Maud and his sister. They were comparing notes of their attainments, with a view to next week's lessons. Maud, having lived some years abroad, and having a French nurse, was ahead of Lily in talking and understanding French, but the latter was not behind her in the grammar. Lily could play very creditably on the piano, and was in advance of Maud, who could not persuade herself to practise. Godfrey also liked music, and could not only make his little tunes almost beautiful by the expression he put into them, but his countenance and attitude when he chanced upon a chord which pleased his ear, were, as his nurse said—"a sight to see."

"I like history the best of the other lessons," remarked Lily.

"Well, I don't; I can't endure it," replied Maud. "I like geography. You see, it's such fun finding the places on the map, and wondering what they are like. Aunt Lesley has got such a splendid book upstairs, full of pictures of different places. I'll show it to you sometime, and then you'll long, like I do, to go and see them really. When papa comes home, I mean to get him to take me."

"Where do you want to go, Maud?" asked Lily.

"Oh! up and down everywhere nearly," was her

friend's heedless answer. "There's the Alhambra in Spain, and the Catacombs at Rome, and the funny leaning Tower at Pisa, and the mountains and glaciers, and heaps and heaps. Why, I sometimes feel as if I couldn't wait."

"What a funny girl you are, Maud!" said Lily, amused by Maud's excitement, and the gestures which accompanied her words.

"I wish I could go too," uttered Godfrey, rapturously. "I'd like to be a traveller; but I want to go in a ship, and kill whales, and polar bears, and ride in a sledge drawn by beautiful reindeer or prairie dogs. Wouldn't I crack my whip at 'em!"

The girls laughed, and Lily said, in her little, old-fashioned way—

"You always talk of prairie dogs, Godfrey, when you mean Esquimaux dogs."

"Never mind, Lily," retorted Godfrey, who was seldom at a loss for an answer. "They're all the same specius; they're all dogs, Lily."

"Species, dear," corrected his sister again.

This time Godfrey shut his lips tightly, and looked straight at her, his manner of showing vexation.

"Here, Godfrey," exclaimed Maud, throwing an anti-macassar over his head; "you be a traveller, and I'll be a prairie dog, and drag you in a railway rug," and away she darted into the hall to fetch one.

"Are my little folks in the library, Miss Maud?" asked Nurse Graham, coming downstairs as she was re-entering.

"Yes, nurse, but you don't want them just yet, do you?" said Maud; "we're going to have a new game, and it'll be such fun."

Old nurse smiled. "It is very nearly tea-time, dearie, and you have to dress, you know, to go down to dessert this evening."

"I can't think why aunt wants us to go to the dining-room; there's enough of it in the drawing-room, I'm sure," said Maud, pettishly. "However, we'll come in a few minutes."

"You won't forget, will you?" asked nurse, dubiously.

"Oh, no!" answered the child, returning to her friends. "Now, you'll have to be quick, Godfrey," she said, "for nurse is in a fidget, and we have to go in to dessert to show you two off after our tea. There's a dinner-party to-day."

"A dinner-party!" repeated Godfrey; "will there be many people?"

"I don't know," answered Maud, throwing open the rug. "There, jump in, Godfrey; and you take that end, Lily, and I'll take this. Now, clap your hands, Mr Traveller, and off we go."

Away went the trio round the room, and, amidst

the somewhat wild enjoyment, forgot all about tea and Nurse Graham.

"Miss Maud, Miss Lily, Master Godfrey, what are you about?" they heard her say some time afterwards. "This is no play for you, why you have heads like brooms."

"Never mind, nurse, we have had such fun," gasped Maud.

"That we have," repeated Godfrey, disentangling himself from the folds of the rug, and holding up his rosy mouth to be kissed.

"You rogue! you want to coax me into not scolding you, do you?" said nurse; "but what's become of your promise, Miss Maud?" she added.

"I didn't mean to break it," answered the little girl; "still I didn't think much about it any way."

"You didn't tell me you'd promised, Maud," remarked Lily, as they all went upstairs.

"You think you wouldn't have forgotten it if you'd known," retorted Maud, who was apt to be quick tempered when hot and excited. "Well, next time I'll let you know, and then we'll see if you remember."

"Hush, my dears," interrupted nurse, smiling at the two girls so pleasantly that it was impossible for them to quarrel.

"It was a shame of us to give you two journeys to fetch us," said Maud, when they reached the nursery. "I'm sorry, for one."

"And so are we," chimed in Lily and Godfrey; "very sorry."

"Well, never mind, my dears, I shall get my breath back all right in a few minutes; but I'm not so young as I used to be," returned old nurse, kindly.

"Mam'selle Maud look like I know not what, wid her red cheeks; de red do not become her," said Justine; "but mam'selle Lilie is very gentille wid hers. She is une vraie petite Lilie—toute blanche! Now come; de tea is ready."

There were very few events more distasteful to Maud than the dressing and adorning which Lady Lesley thought proper for her little niece when invited to join her guests either for dessert or in the drawing-room after dinner; and not only did Maud dislike what she called being "shown off," but the grand ladies and gentlemen excited in her a naughty spirit of opposition and contradiction which she frequently did not attempt to control. This evening her aunt's order was more than usually irksome, and Justine's patience was tried to the uttermost.

"Oh, Justine, how you do pull!" cried Maud.

"What for did mam'selle play so downstairs?"

returned Justine, vigorously brushing the tangled curls.

"I cannot endure it, Justine; I wish you would put them in a net."

"Then mam'selle would be as ugly as—as—a hippotame," concluded the nurse.

Maud was not entirely proof against this frightful fate, but she let her head jerk about, consequently making the disagreeable business far longer than it need have been. But cross children are not wise enough to see how often they punish themselves by their ill-temper. The hair was smoothed in time, and fell gracefully over the round white shoulders, and then commenced a dispute as to which frock Maud should wear. Justine, on seeing her hot cheeks, had chosen a white one with blue ribbons, but Maud, in her perversity, would have on the rose-coloured one which Kate Castaine had made, and which was neither so pretty nor so suitable as the other. In vain Justine persuaded and coaxed. Maud was as obstinate as though no good resolutions had ever been made to be good-tempered and obedient.

"Come, mam'selle, be *raisonable*. What for are you so naughty?" urged the nurse.

"I don't want to wear the white, and I won't," said Maud.

"But de oder is too warm looking, ma belle."

"I don't care; I won't go down at all if I can't have it on," replied Maud.

"My dear, shouldn't you do as Justine wishes you? The white frock is far the most likely," interposed Nurse Graham, who was busy with Lily.

"I don't care," repeated Maud, ignoring the first part of the speech and its suggestions. "I'll wear the pink or none."

"Den I suppose you must," said Justine, seizing the frock and throwing it over Maud's head.

"Stop," cried old nurse, authoritatively, quitting Lily, and laying one hand firmly on Maud's arm. "You know you are doing wrong, Miss Maud. What has become of that friend of ours who spoke last night of conquering her self-will?"

Maud pouted defiantly, and Nurse Graham, seeing her interference was useless, was obliged to leave her to Justine. But all the pleasure of wearing the new frock was gone. Maud did not feel now as if she cared to have one on at all; and if she could have yielded with dignity, she thought to herself, she would have done so, but it was too late, so she allowed Justine to turn and twist her about, a sullen and miserable little girl.

Very quiet and subdued was our young heroine; and one or two of the guests who had met her before thought her much improved. How little did they

guess the state of the child's heart! Now it ached with shame and penitence, and had in it a tiny spice of what we call despair.

"Lena, dear," whispered a sad voice after the ladies and children were in the drawing-room, and while Frances Lesley was playing a brilliant sonata,—“Lena, dear, I've come to grief again. I shall never be good, Lena, never.”

“What has been the matter, darling?” asked her cousin, kindly.

Whereupon Maud poured forth her trouble, concluding with the mournful assurance, that it was all no use, she never should learn to be good.

Lena comforted her as well as she was able, but she was wanted by her mother's guests, so poor Maud was left to her reflections.

“I wouldn't give up trying, pet, if I were you,” were Lena's last words before going away from the cosy sofa where they had been sitting.

Something in Maud's self repeated, “Don't give up trying;” and as she went slowly upstairs with her companions shortly afterwards, she said to herself, “I shall tell Justine I'm sorry—I really am.”

Before she slept that night she did so. It was very uphill work, this making herself good and conquering faults. It seemed much more like going down than going up, more like being defeated than gaining vic-

ories. But even when we do not ask Him, God watches over and guides us, lets in upon us a little light that we may see our darkness, and teaches us by failure the weakness of our human nature.

"I shall try again," Maud said to herself. "I won't be beaten yet. Perhaps I shall be good to-morrow."

"Do you ever lose your temper, Lily?" she asked, suddenly, after they were in bed.

"Why, yes, to be sure I do," replied Lily, drowsily.

"But I've never seen you," urged Maud.

"Oh! but I do sometimes," replied Lily. "But I'm so sleepy, Maud. Don't you want to go to sleep?"

"Not a bit," said she. "I'm not going to be self-willed to-morrow, Lily."

"No?" murmured her friend.

"No; and I'm not going to be selfish any more either; do you hear, Lily? Don't go to sleep, I want to talk."

"No! I don't like fish," muttered Lily, in reply.

"What?" exclaimed Maud, with an impatient sigh.

"I declare she's asleep. How unkind of her, when I want to talk so very much! Oh, dear!"





CHAPTER VII.

THE "PIPING CROW."

AND what of Nell? on what sort of a road were her tender little feet treading? When Moll's strong arms seized and bore her off from her steamboat friend, she felt as though the best of her life was over, and that nothing remained in the future but misery and woe. Not one of the busy crowds on their way asked why she cried. Tears and sorrow are all too common in the world to excite generally more than a compassionate glance, if they do that; and after being carried far enough out of the way, Nell was set down roughly on the pavement, and ordered to "come along and not whine any more."

Moll kept hold of one small hand, jerking it energetically whenever another sob was heard, or symp-

toms of lagging were apparent. The lodgings they sought were at some distance from the wharf, so that with crying and running, Nell was quite tired by the time they reached the door of the "Piping Crow," a common resort of strolling musical professionals. It was a gloomy, dismal-looking place, dark, grim, and shrouded in February smoke and damp. The lower windows were closed with shutters, but there was light in the entrance.

Over the doorway hung the comical weather-beaten old crow which gave its name to the house. Why it was called "Piping" is a mystery; as if ever a crow piped, certainly even in its young days this one never did. Perhaps it was called so in derision; perhaps on account of the peculiar sound it made when swinging with extended wings from a projecting iron rod in the chill wind.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, the "Piping Crow" had probably been the town mansion of some grandee. The living-room or kitchen, into which Nell and her companions entered, bore traces of an ancient splendour, for here and there small pieces of ornamental cornice work still remained, dusty, dirty, and broken, but suggestive. The fireplace also spoke mutely; it was wide and open, and the sides, which had evidently once been carved or moulded, ran up almost to the ceiling. Two grimy, defaced cherubs gazed down

from its heights on the degraded, sin-defiled humanity below.

What tales could they not have told, those two, had speech been granted them! Tales of gaiety and laughter, of weddings and mirth, of feasting and fighting, of misery and sorrow, vice, heart-breakings, and death. But no word nor sign escapes those aged, stony lips, and those never-closing eyes watch and watch, and the men and women heed them not, are, indeed, utterly unconscious of them. Neither do they remember those other Eyes which rest upon them continually, never weary, never sleeping, but waiting until either the sum of iniquity is completed, or, broken and contrite, the wayfarer's heart turns towards its Maker.

A deal table occupied the centre of the room, and round it were several men and women. Bill and his wife joined them, but Nell held back and took refuge in the shadow of the door. There was plenty of noise everywhere. Four bearded Germans were drinking and quarrelling over the day's gains, some of which lay scattered before them. Nearer the fire were two women, one cooking something for supper, the other putting a fresh string to a small Welsh harp, humming meanwhile the newest popular song. In the corner next to Nell, a boy some twelve or thirteen years old crouched on the floor, feeding and petting a sharp-eyed, chattering

dressed up in a faded scarlet jacket, which cast such fierce and horrible glances at Nell, that her knees trembled beneath her. While she stood, a young lad and a girl entered, and taking the nearest seats, put down their instruments, a guitar and a banjo, and then pulling some bread and cheese from their pockets, commenced eating it. These two last comers talked so quietly, and seemed so fond of one another, that Nell could not but look at them. Once the girl slipped a piece of her cheese on to the lad's knee while his head was turned away a minute, and he in his turn, when a hard crust defied her teeth, got out an old clasp-knife and cut it for her.

"They've all got somebody to love them, but me," thought Nell, mournfully; and then the voice of the woman sounded in her ears, telling her of the King, and how loving and kind He was. She believed it, too, in a general sense, but she herself felt so small an atom in the great wide world, that she could not yet say, "He loves me."

She was puzzling deeply over her little life, like an infant philosopher, when a sharp scratch and pull brought her suddenly back into the kitchen of the "Piping Crow." The monkey, incited by his mischievous master, had sprung upon her shoulders, and was holding on by her tangled hair. A laugh from the men at the table, aroused by her screams, and a rough

push from Moll, who came to deliver her, was all sympathy which she received to make up for the loss and pain. After giving a passing cuff to the moribund boy, and a crust of bread to Nell, Moll returned to her seat and resumed the interrupted conversation with her new acquaintances. Nell, more miserable than ever, threw herself down on the ground in despair and wailed. Whether she had been asleep or not she did not know, but all at once she was aware of herself in the uproar, followed by a great outburst of crying. Looking up, startled and curious, she saw a tall white-haired old man standing just inside the door, dressed in threadbare and rusty black clothes. A small dog, a middle-sized tan terrier, with large sharp eyes, which darted hither and thither, observant and alert. To the collar on its neck was fastened a chain, the other end of which passed round the man's wrist. In his left hand the stranger held an open book, carefully rubbing its pages with the fingers of his right. His head was erect, and the expression on his face so kindly and honest, and steadfast was that Nell felt herself wonderfully attracted by him. Rough and loud were the voices on every side, but he betrayed no sign of fear. He stood amongst the lawless people, defenceless, blind, aged—strong in the knowledge of his Master's protection. He came there with his life in his hand—came as he was

to do at intervals whilst doing his Lord's business. Were his life required of him, he was ready to lay it down, as a faithful and fearless servant. What was death to him, when its sting had been taken away for ever by the Master's hand?

Was it strange that for his Saviour he dare risk all? If it were so, it should shame our cold, dull, cowardly hearts to confess it. He was not afraid, not even when a large hand grasped his arm; he only smiled, and, raising his voice, said—

"Friends, I bring you a message."

"Let's hear it," said one man, elbowing his way nearer.

"No we won't—its stuff," said another.

"I'll knock yer down if yer don't be off," shouted a third, lifting his fist to strike.

"You coward! would you touch a blind man?" exclaimed the lad who had interested Nell, thrusting himself in front.

"Oh! Will! Will! don't get theeseelf hurt," cried the girl, wringing her hands in terror.

The youth flung back his hair with the grace of a young lion, and stretched his slender figure to its full height.

"Look you here," he shouted; "if any of you touches the old chap, I'll fight him."

His bold words might have cost him dear, had not a broad-shouldered, stalwart man come to the rescue.

"You're a plucky cub, you are," he said to the lad; "I'll back you. Come, comrades," he continued, addressing the unruly company, "yer kicking up a awful shine about nothin'. Let's hear what un's got to say. It won't do any on us any harm to hear un. Now, Joe, go a-head for five minutes, and I'll stan' by you."

Blind Joe's new defender being a sort of a leader amongst these unruly scions of society, after a few growls and evil words the hubbub grew quieter, and settled into a silence in which the evangelist could be easily heard. It was a striking scene. In the foreground the figure of the noble old man, bare-headed and serene, his mild grey eyes resting upon the unknown crowd about him, gathering them to him in his brotherly love and pity, while reading out of his book, in clear impressive tones, the parable of the Marriage-supper. Close beside him were his two protectors, the girl, and several of the women, and at his side, drinking in every word, was little Nell. Behind them stood the other men and women, some sullen, dark, and defiant, some utterly indifferent, and a few slightly expectant. Only five minutes to preach the gospel in! he could not give much of a sermon. He closed his book, saying, with intense earnestness—

"My friends, this is the message I have brought you from the King, my Master. 'Come, for all things

are now ready.' All of you are invited, each one by name. None are too wicked—none too miserable or too poor ; for the King sent His Son Jesus to die for us, and His blood shed on the cross can wash out sin. Jesus died, and His hands can wipe away all tears. Jesus died, and in Him we may possess all things, being made through Him sons of God and heirs of heaven. Friends, dear friends, you are all called. He loves you all—He died for all ! Won't any of you come to Him and be saved and blessed ? Won't one of you come ?" Pausing but an instant for breath, and before his listeners could stop him, he raised his voice still higher, and sang, with tremulous pathos :—

" Oh ! come, all ye sinful, ye burdened and weary,
Oh ! come ye and answer your King's loving call ;
The path you are treading is dang'rous and dreary,
But He has a home and a welcome for all.
Then come—oh ! come, for He has a home and a
welcome for all.

" Once we were threaten'd with judgment and anger,
Still it awaits those who mind not His call ;
But hearts that repent are in peril no longer,
For Jesus has died on the cross for us all.
Then come—oh ! come, for Jesus has died on the cross
for us all.

" Falling before Him, let's beg, ' God forgive us ;
Hear us, and help us ; we come at Thy call ;'

And from brow, feet, and hands, drops of blood He will
give us,

And saved will be even the worst of us all.

Then come—oh ! come, and saved will be even the
worst of us all.

“ Fâther, have mercy upon us, I pray Thee.

Jesus, our Saviour, I’ve echoed Thy call :

Risen Redeemer, our Father, oh ! hear me,

And give now Thy blessing to each and to all.

Give—oh ! give, and give now Thy blessing to each and
to all.”

As the last notes passed his lips, he gently pulled the dog’s chain, and replacing his cap, with a word or two of thanks, and a silent but heartfelt prayer, he turned and went away. Hardly was he in the street, before a little hand touched him, and an eager, childish voice said—

“ Did you really say the King sent you ? ”

The old man stopped, and felt the speaker as he replied—

“ Yes, I said so ; for He said to me, ‘ Let him that heareth say Come.’ I heard Him call me, so now I go into the highways and hedges, and say—‘ Come.’ ”

“ Then you know the King too ? Does He love you ? ” asked Nell.

“ Does He love me ? ” repeated Blind Joe, his old heart bounding for joy. “ Why, He died for me ; He walked this earth for three-and-thirty years ; He

toiled, and sorrowed, and hungered ; He was weary, sleepless, hunted ; He was poor, friendless, despised, without roof over His head, or pillow under it. He took our sin upon Him, bore His Father's just anger, was beaten, mocked, reviled, and died. Died !" said the old man, his eyes looking up to heaven. " Oh ! God, He died, and men still sin ! He died, His blessed arms outstretched, as if to bless even from the cross. Does He love me, that He did all this and far, far more for me, and you, and all of us ? Yes, I'm sure He loves me, even me."

Awe-stricken, Nell listened. " But I am so little and bad," said she, after a moment's pause. " I don't know the King."

" But He knows you, my child, and loves you, and died for you."

" For me !" echoed Nell, in wonder ; " for me, my very own self ! Does He know I've got nobody to love me, and that I'm poor, and cold, and miserable ? Do you think, dear man, He really loves me ?" In her earnestness, Nell pressed close up, and slid her hand into that of Blind Joe.

" My little lamb," he answered, tenderly, " I know He loves you. He said Himself—' Let little children come unto Me.' Give Him your heart, and He will never let you want a friend. Kneel down and ask Him to forgive you all you have ever done wrong,

and to make you good and like Himself, and tell Him all that hurts and troubles you, and you won't feel lonely any more."

"How will I tell Him?" asked Nell. "He lives away, so far off up there, He won't hear me unless I shout."

The old man smiled,—“Jesus is God,” he said, “and He can do everything; and He can hear our hearts speaking when there is no sound from our mouths; and He can hear a whisper just as well as a great cry. When we ask Him really, He comes and lives in our hearts, and is with us always, till He takes us away to His beautiful home to be happy for ever and ever.”

“I'll ask Him,” said Nell, joyously. “I guess I'll like to have Him in my heart, and I'll talk to Him often.”

“God bless you, dear little one! Keep up a good courage, and whatever troubles and distresses you, never forget that He loves you, your very own self, and will make you quite happy some day. Now, good-bye, we shall meet again.”

He bent down and kissed the up-turned face. He could not see how tear-stained it was; if he had, very probably he would have given two kisses instead of one.

Nell watched him out of sight in the gloom, led by

the faithful dog, and then went back to the lodging-house. She looked into the kitchen; there all was noise and bustle again, whatever impression Blind Joe's words had made on them at the moment. She peeped about to find a nook in which to curl herself for the night, for she had no mind to return to the living-room.

"Want to go to bed?" asked the woman of the house, hurrying by.

"Yes, please," said Nell. "Where'll I go?"

"You'll find a bit of a bed big enough for you in that there corner."

Nell went quickly where the woman pointed. It certainly was a bit of a bed, and the blanket was very thin for a February night; but she heeded it not; she was thinking of something else.

"I'll ask Him to come now," she said to herself; and kneeling down she whispered—"Oh! please, King Jesus, come and live in my heart, and make me good and happy. Please, I'm a very little girl, and all by myself; but he says you love me, and I am so glad; and I love you, dear King Jesus."

The low sounds died away, but Nell still knelt; her heart was speaking to the King, and she knew He could hear it. The Great Shepherd had taken His little lamb in His arms and blessed her. No wonder Nell was happy!

No effort to find God is ever in vain ; the weakest prayer, if sincere, will find its way to the Saviour's ear, and will obtain an answer at the right time and in the right way. The child sends up a few words feebly put together. The mourner lifts up streaming eyes and sighs wordless. The poverty-stricken cries for daily bread, and the scholar prays with fluent speech. But one and the same Spirit inspires each, if the prayer is of faith, and all are accepted ; for the power is in the spirit, not in the form of words.

So Nell prayed, and lay down and slept, for the first time in her short life, with the assurance of a Friend watching over her, blessing, protecting, and loving her. The woman on the steamboat taught her, "God loves us ;" but the blind evangelist taught her, "Jesus loves me."





CHAPTER VIII.

THE TERRIBLE SECRET.

THE next day dawned gloomily, and threatened to become worse ; but such small matters as mist and cold did not deter our party from going forth on their daily tramp. On and on they dawdled, and it needed all Nell's faith in her old friend's words to keep up her courage. Not only was the weather bad, but Moll's temper was even fiercer than usual. The heavy English air also seemed to choke Nell's voice, and she felt oppressed and out of tune. She had gone to sleep the night before so confident in the future—so hopeful—unconsciously fancying something would happen to help her, now she knew the King as a Friend ; but nothing came, and hour after hour passed wearily. No one seemed charitably disposed either ;

very few pennies needed picking up, and Nell was scolded accordingly. It was with great pleasure, therefore, that she heard a gentleman say—"Here's a penny for you, little girl." The coin was given to her, and just as Moll made a snatch at it, she saw that it was not a penny, but a half-crown. Her conscience instantly awoke. To be good, there was no doubt, she must be honest. Closing her fingers tightly over it, she darted after the giver. Overtaking him at the next crossing, the mistake was soon put right, and, with a shilling for reward, she returned to her guardians. Moll was in a terrible rage, and Bill even was so offended that he did not say a word in her behalf.

"I'll teach ye, ye wicked little thing! You'll see what you'll get this very night," she said, at the end of a torrent of abuse. "If ye don't repent a-doing that ere piece of ugliness, my name ain't Moll Jenks. I'll beat ye within a inch of yer life, and then we'll get rid on ye." And the bad woman gave a scowling grin which filled Nell with terror.

A beating was bad enough, but there was a vague horror in this last threat which struck the child chill. What would they do with her? All the way back to the "Piping Crow," Jenks and Moll disputed. Nell wondered if it were about her, but in the rattle of the streets she could not hear.

"Now I shall catch it," she thought, with a shiver, as they neared the lodgings. To her surprise, however, the man let fall his cap, and while picking it up, managed to whisper, "Don't be afeared, little un; she shan't touch ye." Nell stood still with joy on hearing this welcome assurance, and stared hard at her rough comforter as he went whistling after his wife. In her simple way she reasoned on this deliverance,—“He let them beat Him, but He won't let them beat me. I asked Him to take care of me, and so He does—dear King Jesus!”

Trusting in her great Friend, therefore, she followed Bill, and crept away to a shadowed place beside the fire, as far from Moll as possible.

“Here, Nell, here's yer supper,” shouted Bill; for Moll, forbidden to strike the child, revenged herself by leaving her hungry. Timidly receiving it, Nell returned to her snug seat, and there ate it very contentedly. Just as she was finishing, she heard a mournful voice close by her say,—

“I wish I was dead, I do!”

It was such a sudden desperate speech, that Nell turned round with a start, and was not much reassured to find that the speaker was the monkey-boy. Evidently he was now in great distress, and in quite a different frame of mind to that of last night. Tears always claimed sympathy from Nell, so, although the

sight of him recalled painful sensations, she was moved to ask, after a short hesitation—

“What’s the matter?”

The boy pointed disconsolately to the monkey, which was sitting against the wall looking the picture of despair, holding one of his fore-paws in a very strange manner.

“It’s broke. Oh! my Jacko,” wailed the master, rolling in a passion of grief on the floor.

“Poor little thing!” said Nell, shyly but pitifully regarding the injured pet. “What shall we do?”

The boy turned round astonished; such kind words were rare.

“I don’t know,” he answered. “A lad shied a stone at him, and broke it. Oh, my Jacko!”

“What do doctors do when folks get their legs broke?” asked Nell, after a pause of pitiful reflection.

“Hurrah! you’re a sharp un, you are,” said the boy, admiringly, brushing his hand across his face and leaving tide-marks of sorrow in all directions. “I knows,” he continued, solemnly; “they puts a stick on both sides and ties it up. There was a fellow I knew, when I was a little chap, as had his arm broke, and got took to a hawspital, and they did that to un. But where’ll we get the bits of wood? They’ll have to be thinnish, I guess.”

“I’ll go and try to find some,” said Nell, briskly,

though her limbs ached after the long day's work. Nothing is better for tired people than the excitement of a kind deed.

The treasure-house was the gutter ; and she was seeking busily therein, when a woman standing near asked her if she had lost something. Nell soon told what was wanted, and the woman, one of the idle, good-natured sort, said with a laugh—

“So ye're after mending the monkey's legs, are ye? Wella ! wella ! an' ye want some bits of wood, eh? I never set much by that hanimal, but I'll give ye a stick.”

Cautiously Nell made her way back to the boy, and triumphantly handed him a piece of firing split thin.

“You're a brick !” said he, hilariously ; “but what'll we tie it on with?”

Another consultation ensued, and again Nell proved equal to the difficulty by offering a strip of her already tattered shawl. All this time the monkey eyed them with great gravity—very suspicious of the preparations. With much reluctance he allowed his master to touch the injured leg ; and extreme patience and fortitude were needful on all sides before the extemporised splinters were securely bound on. When the operation was over, however, the two young surgeons rested mutually delighted. The acquaintance so well begun was worthily continued. The boy told Nell his name

was Lanty, and asked hers, and on learning it, remarked that it was "near about as pretty as herself." Then he told her stories of his life ; how he wandered about with Jacko ; and he was so funny and amusing, that Nell grew quite merry, and was almost laughing, when a loud call of "Nell Jenks, you come here," startled her, and brought back the old dread.

"Be sharp and don't be scared," encouraged Lanty, as the child sprang off towards Moll and Bill, who were talking fast and eagerly to a short, stout, and excessively ugly man at the far end of the table.

"This ere's her, is it?" he asked, adding, with a leer which he intended to be winning, "Come here, my pretty dear."

Nell obeyed, because she dare not do otherwise ; but her flesh crept, for, with a child's unerring instinct, she felt this man to be thoroughly bad, and cruel and repulsive. He regarded critically her slender, beautifully-shaped hands and arms ; and Moll tore off one of the wretched boots that he might see the tiny little foot and ankle. Then he made her perform several small feats. She had to jump off the table without stumbling, and to stand on one foot near its edge, while he supported one hand. He told her to turn round on her toes until he bid her stop, and then try to remain on them quite still without falling. Being much too frightened by the hard countenances about

her to resist, Nell did her best, and was, on the whole, to judge by the man's nods and low whistles, successful. These exercises finished, a second man, taller and younger than his companion, came forward, and after telling Nell that he had heard she had a good voice, asked her to sing him a song. This was worse than jumping about; but a pinch and a shake from Moll overcame her reluctance, and bore her up through a verse or two of one of her ballads.

"You'll find she has a sperrit," observed Moll to the stout man, who answered, with dignity—

"M'am, in our parfession we comes across a multitude of characters; but we have our ways of circumventing all of 'em. We ain't no ways afraid of character. Why, m'am, I wouldn't mind saying that in one month from this date that child 'ill be as meek as milk, if so be's that we takes her under our supervision."

This speech, and the gestures which accompanied it, satisfied even Moll's evil nature. Meanwhile Nell had returned to Lanty, who, looking at her with a sort of comical compassion, said—

"Knows, may be, what's up there, Nell?"

"No, I don't—not a bit. What is it? do you know?"

The boy gave a cunning nod and wink, saying, "Rather!"

"Do tell me what it is," urged Nell.

"You'll likely not be suited if ye do know ; it ain't nothin' over pleasant."

"Never mind, do tell me ;" and Nell was so beseeching, that Lanty, who was burning with the secret, could no longer resist.

"It ain't every one as I'd give news to for nothin' ; but you's been that good to my Jacko, and that nice about my teasing on you yesternight, that I'll tell ye all I knows—so here goes. But," he added, drawing back, "you'd best not hear ; it'll cut ye up dreadful, I'm feared."

"Oh ! do go on. What are they going to do with me ?" begged Nell, remembering the threat of a few hours previous.

"Put your head down, then ; if ye will, ye will ;" and, after glancing round to see if they were unnoticed, Lanty told the terrible secret.

It took some time before Nell understood it fully ; but when she did, when she had listened to all its ins and outs into which Lanty could take her, then indeed she was dismayed.

Was she really to be deserted, and given to those terrible men, with their dark faces and steely eyes ? Bill and Moll were bad enough, but beside these strangers they seemed almost angelic. Was she really to lose these the only protectors she knew of on earth ?—to be taken away, and made to ride great

horses, and to be beaten and starved, and perhaps killed? Had not Lanty seen a little girl no bigger than she was sent up a rope to the tip-top of a high tent? This was the secret over which Nell shivered and sobbed.

Lanty having overheard a plan to lend Nell out, as it was called, until some unknown danger were past, had cleverly put two and two together, when he saw the men who talked with Jenks and his wife. He recognised them as partners in a travelling circus, which he had met with and attended while on his journeys up and down the country. Seeing his tales taking great hold of Nell's vivid imagination, he was tempted to enlarge a little here and there; and although aware of her distress, he did not as a boy realise how indescribably fearful to the timid lonely child was the life which he so eloquently pictured, and which in some ways he considered rather enjoyable. Curious to learn more of her intended future, Lanty again managed to play the part of eavesdropper that night in the common sleeping apartment; and before Nell and her companions left the "Piping Crow" the next morning, he informed her that the men were coming again that evening to take her off with them, and to bring Bill the requisite sum of money to buy her services for five years. Nell raised her swollen eyes, but received this extra news silent and tearless. One idea alone pos-

sessed her—What could she do to save herself? This question beat in every throb of her heart throughout that long, long day, which yet passed all too quickly. Lanty had suggested running away, but that was too bold a step. She would try and win Bill's pity by earning a great deal. Thus she thought, and not unreasonably; and so fair a pocketful of pence rewarded her endeavours, that as they proceeded Bill did say—

“It's a'most a pity, Moll, we've promised her, poor little lass! I'm a bit sorry for her.”

There was a gleam of humanity somewhere in this man's frozen heart, and Nell had found the minute spot, which it had partly thawed, but it had not power to influence him to spoil a good bargain. As they walked along, Moll caught hold of Nell, and began to tell her the fate destined for her. Piteously the child pleaded to remain with them, passionately promising to be good, and always to sing her very best. All her entreaties were in vain, for there was more to propitiate than Moll's hatred and Bill's indifference. But she knew nothing of that.

“Shut up, or I'll make ye,” commanded the former. “There ain't no help for ye at all, so ye might as well make up yer mind to it; not that it matters much, for it'll be made up for ye, I guess. That gentleman ye saw last night has a horse-whip half-a-mile long, that cracks like a steam-ngine, and he'll see whether

you've a mind or not. I wouldn't be you if ye're ugly when he gets ye."

Happily for little Nell's reason, Moll was here interrupted by loud cries of "Stop thief! stop thief!" and the sound of many feet in the rear. A lad came rushing down the street, pursued closely by a policeman and a large number of idlers, all shouting and yelling. As the lad reached them, he staggered and fell, tripped up by Bill's foot in his blind race. He uttered a sharp gasping cry, and struggled to rise, but before he could stir the crowd was upon him, and in surrounding him, gathered to itself Nell, Jenks, and Moll. Faint with fatigue and terror, footsore, and bewildered by the uproar and tumult, Nell surrendered herself without an effort, and was carried hither and thither by the eager swaying people, now clinging to this one, now to that, in momentary danger of being thrown down and trampled underfoot. All the occupants of the neighbouring houses were on the alert. Men came out like bees from a hive, women screamed from the windows, and squalid children echoed on the outskirts every variety of noise. The thief had been hurt in falling, a fact which added zest to the capture; and turning in the narrow street, most of the throng still accompanied the policeman and his charge on their way back, bearing Nell along with them.

At length, breathless and confused, she found herself

stranded in a muddy doorway, where she thankfully sat down to rest and to consider her situation. As she was wondering what to do next, and looking round for Jenks and Moll, she perceived two men walking towards her. It needed hardly a second glance to tell her that these were her new and much-feared masters. They were coming to fetch her. She was sure of it; and in an instant she had darted off, as if for her life. Whither she knew not, she cared not; if only she might escape the reality of Lanty's secret. One place was the same as another, if far enough away from them.

On hurried the little feet, forgetting they were tired and aching. When breath failed, she fell from running to walking, ever casting looks of fear behind.

At length she was convinced she was alone, and that her enemies were at a distance; still the nervous dread remained and urged her forward. It was too cold also to stand. The great buildings rose up on all sides grey and awful, clothed in the damp dusk which was swiftly sliding into night. The chill wind whistled round the corners, and moaned ghostly music among the chimney-tops. Strangers bustled past her, all cold, all busy, all wishful to reach home or shelter—not one taking any notice of the anxious, shivering, homeless child! She was only one of thousands, but she did not know that; and if she had, would it have

comforted her? Does it ever make our pain or trouble less to be assured that we are no worse off than our neighbours? It may possibly be superficial, and it does undoubtedly appeal to our sympathies, but it is no real balm for the heart. The certainty of a world-wide sorrow, which, by reason of our own needs, we are nearly powerless to help, crushes or hardens, as the case may be, but it cannot truly console or relieve. We must be comforted by the God of consolation before we can firmly bear the weight of mortal woe. Hopelessly, aimlessly, Nell toiled on. Once she followed a lamplighter, with a stray thought of speaking to him, but he was too quick for her, and soon outstripped her. Instinctively she avoided the shops; they gave too much light for a runaway. Tired out at last, a dark doorstep afforded her a retreat. Crouching in a corner, a drowsy faintness stole over her—the image of Blind Joe entered her mind. She roused herself to whisper a few words of prayer, that now she was so very lonely, she might be taken to the Happy Home.

A consciousness of the Great King's love and care calmed and lulled her into a short deep sleep. From this the gruff voice of a policeman awakened her. He bade her "Move on," and she obeyed. But the cold mist had become a drizzle; and not knowing what to do or where to go, shelterless and

friendless, she was just about to venture under a low archway, when some mischievous, prowling creature caught sight of her, and, whooping loudly, began to chase her. Her former horror instantly returned, increased in violence; and long after the place had been relinquished, Nell fled up one street and down another, turning this way and that in a fever of terror, until all at once strength utterly deserted her. Houses, ground, sky, everything in and around her reeled and waved with a deafening hum, and Nell lay senseless in the darkness—Lost in London.





CHAPTER IX.

FRANK'S STORY.

AS may be easily guessed, poor Maud Knollis did not become good next day, according to her hope and purpose, nor for many days. In reality the matter was hopeless, for she had laid hold of a wrong end, and the tangle in her young life was constantly showing fresh difficulties. The law—"Thou shalt, and thou shalt not"—harassed her, causing continual knots and stoppages. There was now no return to the old half-unconscious naughtiness. Her conscience was thoroughly wide-awake—a ceaseless and terrible echo; and often and often Maud was tempted to say, "I won't," instead of "I can't be good." She felt keenly the difference between herself and her two friends. Neither Lily nor Godfrey was troubled by a violent temper, and

although the former was at times irritable, she was inclined to be sulky rather than passionate. Careful training and teaching had fostered in both a habit of obedience and submission to those in authority. Thus their wilfulness or vexation was neither so frequent nor so apparent as that of Maud. She could not avoid perceiving this, and had she not been as generous and candid as she was self-willed and hasty, the friendship between the three must have been interrupted by jealousy; for Maud was not able to discern in them the germs of faults quite as dangerous as her own if permitted to grow. She knew nothing of the complacency of Lily's heart in its self-righteousness, and how like a little Pharisee she said unwittingly to herself—"I'm glad I'm not like Maud." She knew nothing of the weakness of Godfrey's character, which, in order to escape opposition, would lead him to yield to evil as easily as to good, unless it should be strengthened by the buttress of high principle.

Some wild mountain pony was not more unaccustomed to bit and bridle than our young heroine to the curb of "shalt and shalt not." More fiercely than ever her will strove to free itself and regain the lonely but unchecked liberty of the past. The struggle was a hard one.

"I really don't know what to think about her," reflected Nurse Graham, one night when unable to

sleep. "She seems in such terrible earnest sometimes, and then it all goes out of her head or heart. I'm sure I don't know which it's in, for it seems to make no change that'll bear a trial worth calling one. I can't make it out, but she's a dear disappointing child. There's a mistake somewhere, for there must be grace sufficient for her as for all. Well, well! I can pray for her, as I've done before," concluded the kind old woman, and her prayers were answered; indeed, the failures of the present were a needful preparation.

Two or three weeks had elapsed since the arrival of the Danvers. The newness of the visit had partially worn off. The rubbing of daily life was exposing many roughnesses hitherto unknown to each other, and often, perhaps, to themselves. Maud frankly confessed her shortcomings, lamented over them, promised and resolved, but all in vain. In spite of Lena's gentle counsel and sympathy, and Nurse's good advice and warnings, she constantly failed in her attempts to conquer herself, and was becoming disheartened and tired. Had there not been another friend to aid her, she might have despaired altogether.

This friend was called Frank Davids. He was a young man, some five or six and twenty years of age. Not handsome, nor in any way striking; indeed, but for two things, most persons would have called him

plain and uninteresting on a mere acquaintanceship. His voice and his smile were the two personal talents given him to work with in his Master's cause. Years had passed since his mother had seen that good face, for Mrs Davids was blind ; but she could hear his voice, and so sweet was its music to her ears, that she was content to wait for more.

Frank had been for about two years Mr Danvers's curate, and was beloved and trusted by him as an elder son, and not less so by Mrs Danvers, who, when bidding him good-bye, begged him not to forget to go and see Lily and Godfrey occasionally. Knowing how different Sunday spent in Lady Lesley's mansion would be to Sunday in their own home, Frank rightly guessed they would be most lonely and in need of him on that day. Quietly giving up, therefore, a leisure hour in the afternoon, he devoted it to them. In this manner he became better acquainted with Maud, who had only met him previously once or twice at the rectory, or when calling on her aunt. With Lily and Godfrey he was, of course, great friends, and Maud soon joined them in chatting quite unservedly to him. Very happy and useful were the hours they spent together in the grim library—Maud seated in her favourite reading-chair, peeping out of its depths, with some sentence commencing with "But, Mr Davids ;" Lily on a hassock in front of

the fire, looking grave and reflective ; while Godfrey, on Frank's knee, rested his round head lovingly on his teacher's shoulder. Frank was not long in gaining an insight into Maud's troubles. By little and little he learned how gallantly she had spread her sails, filled her ship with good intentions, and started on her voyage ; next, how she had been blown about by contrary winds without anchor or helm ; and finally, how she was coming back into port again baffled and defeated, in rags and tatters, with no resolutions really kept, no victories of moment won, and a much smaller opinion of herself than when she first set out.

"It has struck four, Maud, by the hall-clock," remarked Lily, on the fourth Sunday afternoon of their visit. "Mr Davids will be here directly. What's the matter with you, Maud?" she added, on receiving no reply. "You don't seem to want him to come to-day."

"Why, of course I do," said Maud, smothering an impatient sigh ; "only one cannot always be red-hot to see people."

Lily looked astonished ; but reflecting that it was one of Maud's speeches, and meant nothing, busied herself in pulling an arm-chair near the fire for Frank, and in placing a hassock for herself.

"There he is !" exclaimed Godfrey, hearing firm

footsteps outside. "I thought you were never coming," said the boy, springing towards him when he entered.

"I am only five minutes late, Master Impatience," said Frank, seating himself after the greeting was over. "What news, Lily?" he continued, seeing an open letter in Mrs Danvers's handwriting lying in her lap.

"Mamma has written me another such a dear long letter. She says papa is much better, and that, if he keeps so, we are to go to them at Eastbourne the beginning of next week. I shall not like to leave you, Maudie, but it will be very, very nice to see papa and mamma again."

"Thank you, Lily," answered Maud. "It has been very pleasant having you and Godfrey here."

After considering the letter and its contents, Frank looked at Maud, who had scarcely spoken a word all the time, and said, kindly—

"Is it the parting which makes you so quiet to-day, Maud? Come, never mind! Lily will most likely be home again before you return into Hertfordshire. Cheer up, little woman!"

But Maud's lips trembled, until she was forced to hide her face in the back of the chair.

"Don't cry, Maudie," whispered Godfrey, sliding off Frank's knee and going to her.

"I'm not a baby!" said Maud, suddenly turning round and confronting them, and unconsciously pushing the boy's caressing hand aside. "I am very sorry you are going away; but it is not that that makes me so miserable. It's because I'm all wrong altogether, and I don't know how to set myself right. I used not to care a bit whether I was good or bad, but somehow everything has been upset, and I cannot get any way at all. I have tried," she continued, in answer to an attempt of Frank to stop the torrent of words,—“I have tried, and it has been all of no use, and I'm far worse than I used to be. Aunt says so—Justine says so—I know I am. I'm ever so much worse since I tried to be good. I wish I could go back, but I cannot. It will not go out of my head. It is there when we are at lessons, and it is there when we play. It's always must or mustn't, and I am tired of it. I hate myself, and almost every one else sometimes. Oh! I am miserable!”

Lily and Godfrey listened to this outburst in frightened surprise. Frank, however, waited until she had quite ceased speaking, and was crying hysterically, when, leaning towards her, he said, very earnestly—

“You have had your say, Maud, now I will have mine. Listen to me. I believe you have never before been so near this goodness that you have striven after—never so near God as you are just now.”

This unexpected answer, and the quiet strength of his voice and manner, stemmed the current of Maud's distress as perhaps nothing else could have done. It brought her back from an imaginary, hopeless space into the immediate circle of God's love and blessing.

"Mr Davids!" she exclaimed, in bewilderment, for where was the possibility of his being right, and yet how could such a friend as he be disbelieved? The seeming contradiction between herself and his assertion, the dim hope hidden in it, at once startled and comforted her.

Equally astonished were both her little companions. They had been overpowered by Maud's passion of temper, as they thought. Happy was it for the poor child that Frank had caught a glimpse amongst her words of something very different.

"I mean what I said, Maud," replied he, compassion both in eyes and voice; for, with a child's abandonment, she was really wretched. "And I will explain myself," he continued. "Some weeks ago I knew there was a young girl in the world called Maud Knollis, and one afternoon I discovered, unknown to her, that she was self-willed, proud, and passionate. From one room to another, accidentally and unavoidably, I heard her decide to please herself, without any reference to the wishes of those around her. I heard her remind her nurse that she was only a servant;

and after saying many wrong things, which I am sure she never meant, I heard her relate her victory with great merriment during tea, when I first saw her."

"Oh! Mr Davids, I am very sorry now," said Maud, feeling much ashamed of herself, and thinking this account of her sins most unnecessary.

Frank smiled, and went on—

"Yes, the first Sunday I came here I found a difference. You had learnt that self-will, pride, and passion are sinful."

"Lena taught me that," interrupted Maud, eagerly.

"Did she?" replied her friend, smiling again.

"Now, I am going to tell you the spirit of each of these four Sundays. On the first it was, 'You shall see how good I'm going to be.' On the second, the tone was not so confident; it was, 'I haven't succeeded yet, but I'm not beaten.' Last Sunday you said, 'I can't make myself good, Mr Davids.' Do you remember?"

"Yes," assented Maud, readily.

"And this Sunday," continued Frank, still more earnestly and kindly, "you say that all the trying has been of no use; indeed, that it has been worse than useless. I know it. I have endeavoured to warn you several times, but you never understood me. I think you will to-day. Children, I will tell you a story, and then we will talk again if you like."

"Oh, please do!" exclaimed all three, taking their accustomed seats.

"I wonder what he is going to say?" thought Maud, sure however that there was help for her coming.

After a few minutes' consideration, Frank looked up. All eyes were turned upon him in delighted expectation; and this was his story:—

"I thought I was standing on the side of a wide valley, lying between mountains whose lofty summits were clothed in golden mist. Right through the midst of it ran a deep, ever-flowing river. No one had ever penetrated to its source, or fathomed its depths. It entered the valley through a great grey rock amongst the hills, and flowed further than eye could reach. Some distance from where I stood it spread itself out into a very large and exquisite basin of white sculptured marble, from which a column of vapour, sparkling snowy-white and ruby-red in the sunshine, arose to the heavens, floating thence outwards in every direction, as though no part of the valley were to escape its influence. I wondered what it meant, and determined to go nearer and speak to some of the inhabitants of the land, whom I could see passing hither and thither below me. On advancing, I found that the valley was divided into plots of ground or fields, some much smaller than others, but none of any great extent. The soil in each was different, as

well as the size. In some it was stony and barren ; in some poor and sandy ; while in others it was dark and rich, and productive of weeds. These fields were also in various stages of cultivation ; many were altogether neglected ; many only slightly laboured ; but in others good seed had been sown, and was peeping above the earth, and here and there it had grown up, and was flourishing and waving about, almost ready for the reaping. I stopped near one plot, attracted by its owner. She was a young girl, whose face ought to have been smiling and lovely. Alas ! her eyes were red with weeping, her cheeks crimson with toil.

“ ‘You are tiring yourself, I fear,’ said I, at length, after watching her some time.

“She glanced up, startled, and, leaning wearily on her spade, repeated—

“ ‘Tiring myself ! Yes, I am tired, but I dare not rest.’

“She turned again to her work. Her field was one of the neglected ones. The ground had become hard, and between the many stones which covered it, prickly and poisonous weeds were springing rankly. She seized one whilst I observed her. Its thorns pierced her hand ; but, in her eagerness, she still grasped it, until a small piece broke off. She flung it down, and taking her spade, strove to dig the plant up by the root. The blood trickled from the scratches

she had received, and the tears from her eyes ; and where they fell, the ground was softened a very little, but evidently her strength was not equal to her task.

“ ‘Are you obliged to work so hard ?’ I asked.

“ ‘Yes,’ she said, still toiling, and her long hair hanging mournfully around her. ‘Yes, I must, for the Master of the Harvest will send for me some day, and call for my sheaves, and I have not a single ear of corn to take Him.’

“ ‘He must be a hard master to expect so much from one so young as you ?’ I remarked, compassionately.

“ ‘There are younger than I whom He has sent for, and who have had sheaves ripe and full. He is not hard, but He is just. I have disobeyed and forgotten His orders, and my field has become what you see, as He warned me it would if I only pleased myself and refused to keep it clear of stones and weeds.’

“ Sobbing bitterly, she recommenced digging. It could not but be in vain. However, I could give no aid ; so very sorrowfully I left her, and walked on.

“ I had not gone far when I found myself watching another child, younger and more delicate. Her cheeks were rosy and dimpled as the morning, and her glance was bright and earnest. When I first saw her, she had taken hold with both hands of a large stone as big as herself. Using all her might, she could

just shake it, but she could not drag it out of its bed, and it reared itself defiantly across her plot, and must be removed. After struggling a while with it, I saw her suddenly stand up—I thought in despair; but it was not so, for putting her small hands reverently together, she looked up to the overshadowing cloud, and sang, in a sweet childish voice—

‘Hard is this stone, I cannot break it;
Heavy is Self, I cannot lift it.
Come then, O Dew of the River, and help me;
Fall thou upon it, and melt it or move it.’

And even as she sang the rock changed colour, and when again she tried to stir it, it began to crumble away.

“‘Will it take long to get rid of, little one?’ I asked of her.

“‘I don’t know,’ she answered, with a smile; ‘but the Master said I was to beg the dew to help me, and He promised that it should move the stones and kill the weeds that the enemy sows.’

“‘Have you people of the valley an enemy, then?’ said I.

“‘Oh! yes,’ she answered; ‘he throws the bad seeds over our fields, and gives us a great deal of trouble. See, there’s one,’ and off she darted.

“Then I remembered the other girl, and turned to retrace my steps. Alas! the work had indeed been

too much for her. Hard lumps of soil were scattered around, dug up by the broken spade. Sharp stones protruded themselves from amongst the brambles, and stern, hot dryness was on everything. The owner meanwhile lay panting on the ground, idle, hopeless, miserable. I cannot tell you how unhappy I was ; for in returning I had seen a beautiful water-spirit come from the river, and go to the field of an old white-haired man, and, after speaking to him, lead him away. Those about told me that the Master of the Valley had sent for him to His palace among the mountains above the golden mist ; and that the sheaves which were standing in his field, rich, yellow, and reaped, would be fetched and put into the great barn, to be kept safely until the Harvest Home.

“But this poor girl had nothing to follow, her should she be called ; and it was very uncertain, I learned, whether those servants who neither sowed nor reaped would ever see the Master’s face, or reach beyond the damp, dark morasses at the foot of the hills. So, grieved was I for her, that, remembering the song of the younger child, I also ventured to look up to the cloud and pray—

‘Heavenly Dew ! see here beneath thee,
One who has toiled, and fainted in toiling ;
Fall thou upon her, in mercy refresh her,
And strengthen her to continue her working.’

"And again the soft, gentle dew heard, and descended upon the weary, heart-broken labourer, and she arose to her knees and cried, humbly—

' O Dew ! thou hast fallen,
But too soiled and too hardened
Am I for thy home.
O Rain of the River !
Come forgive me and cleanse me,
That the Dew may abide !'

" And then, to my surprise, instead of the dew which my prayer had called down, there fell great drops of rain, red like blood, over the girl and her rough field, washing, softening, and comforting; and her face grew beautiful as she caught the drops passionately, and kissed and blessed them; and I felt sure that should I ever see that field again, corn would be springing where now the weeds waved, even whilst fading, and sheaves would be ready for the housing when the Master sent the water-spirit to fetch His forgiven servant home. The rain fell, bringing His forgiveness, and now the girl could sing for the softening dew to melt the stones and kill the weeds, and to remain with her for ever a constant friend and helper.

" Another time," concluded Frank, " I will tell you more about the people of the valley, and how they sowed the 'seed.' Have you understood my allegory?"

The children hesitated, and then Lily, who was the least shy of answering, said—

“I guess, Mr Davids, the fields are our hearts.”

“You are right, Lily,” said Frank. “There is in each of us an evil heart, one full of sins, which will shut us out from God for ever if we cannot master them.”

“But the little girl could not stir the big stone in her field,” said Godfrey.

“Not by herself,” replied Frank. “What had she to do?”

Maud’s cheeks flushed suddenly. The lesson had gone home.

“She asked God to help her! She asked the dew to melt the stone or move it, and He did.”

“Not of ourselves, then,” continued Frank, “nor by ourselves, can we make ourselves good. The work is beyond our strength. We must ask God to take the stony heart out of us, and to give us a heart of flesh—that is, we must ask Him to give us the will to be and to do the right; to give us repentance—that is, to turn us right round, with our back to sin and our faces towards Him. He can do it, for He has already done it for many millions of His servants, and He will do it for you three. Ask Him, and He will send the dew of His Holy Spirit to fall upon you, and to teach you that our Father who is

in heaven is willing to forgive you all the past, for His Son Jesus Christ's sake, if you will believe in His love, and submit yourselves to His holy will."

"That is the beautiful red rain in the story?" said Godfrey.

"Yes," continued Frank; "and lastly, cleansed and forgiven, the softening, strengthening, life-giving dew will remain with us, gradually conquering all our faults; giving humility for pride, peace for passion, self-denial for selfishness; giving us, in fact, day by day the wish to be holy, and the power to be holy. Just so long as we trust everything to God, just so long shall we be victorious in our struggle. But just so soon as we feel able to do for ourselves, just so soon shall we be again defeated. Now, dear children, I am sorry, but my time is gone for staying with you. I must be off at once."

Frank rose as he spoke. After saying good-bye to Lily and Godfrey, he turned to Maud. She sprang up, holding out to him both hands. Frank held them affectionately, and, looking into the dark shadowy eyes, wished that he could know how deeply his words had sunk. But Maud said nothing; perhaps it was as well. There was light enough in her face to convince him that she had at least understood his warning this time.

The children were unusually quiet when their friend

was gone. Although the struggle with sin was not so striking and real to Lily and Godfrey as to Maud, yet they had been much impressed by the earnestness of his manner. They had been greatly interested in his lesson, but the message was to Maud.

“God will make me good,” she said over and over again to herself; and only the tired-out Christian soldier, harassed and beaten by foes without and foes within, can appreciate the rest of giving up the hopeless fight of self against sin, and of going meekly to stand under the shadow of the Cross, to partake there of the victory won thereon over sin, the world, and the devil.

There is still the war to wage, and much hardness to endure; but we may fight under a conquering Captain, clad in good armour; and, with one arm clinging firmly to the Cross of Christ, with the other we shall be enabled not only to defend ourselves, but to strike well-aimed blows at the enemy.





CHAPTER X.

ALMOST DESPAIRING.

“**M**ATCHES, ma'am? any matches, sir? they're cheap and good,” cried the thin voice of a tall, weird-looking girl, who moved hither and thither, offering her wares to first one passer-by and then another. Some said, “No!” some nothing; some, “Get out of the way.” No one bought of her; all were intent on reaching shelter from the bleak, damp air of the same February night when the ballad-singer, Nell, fled from Jenks and Moll.

Shivering, hungry, wet, and weary, Bessie Harris, the match-box seller, leant against the wall of the railway bridge under which she stood, and almost wished that it would fall down, and so put an end to her sufferings.

“It ain't no sort o' use,” she muttered. “There's nobody'll stop to buy this bitter night. Them as can

afford fires has 'em lit, and them as can't don't want matches."

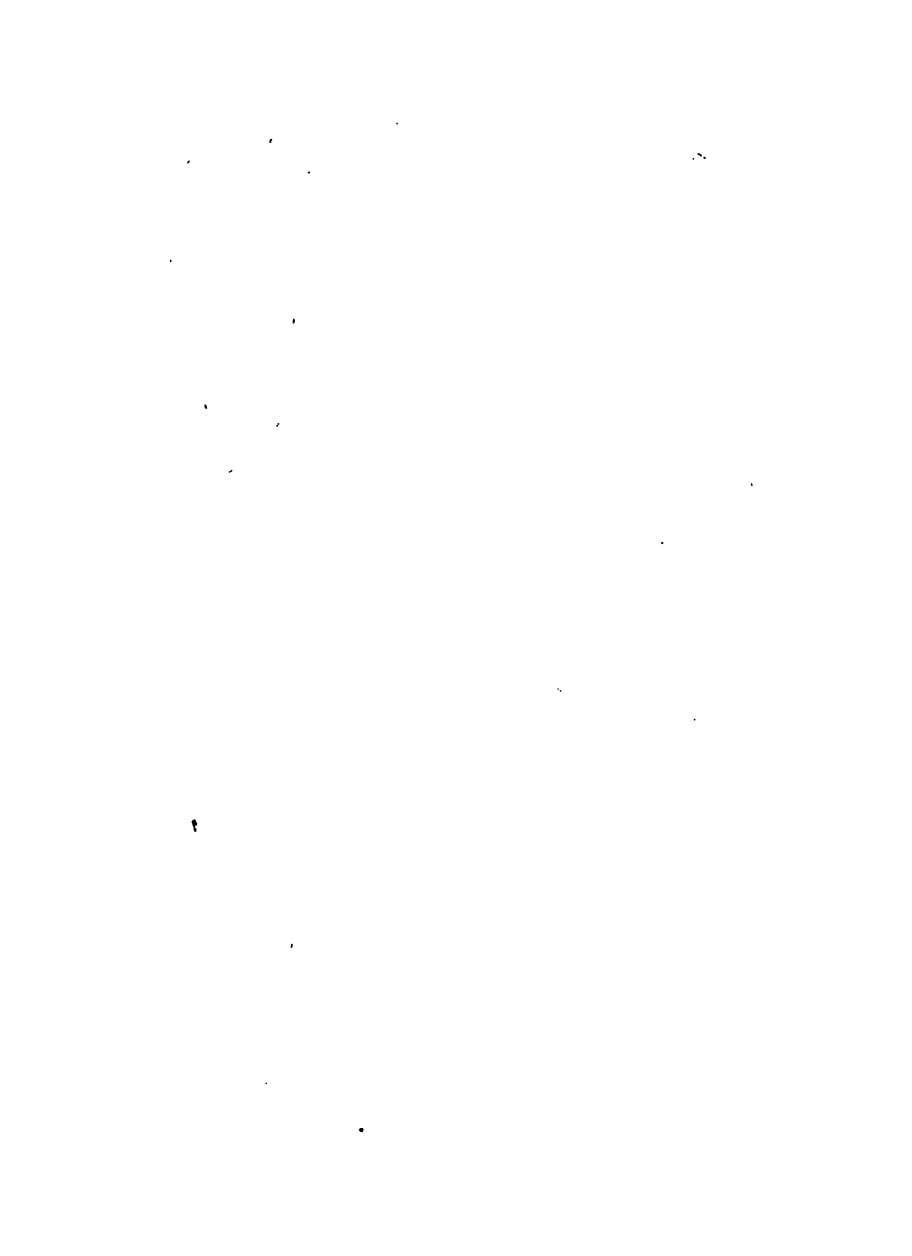
Bessie was only sixteen really, but her hollow, famine-stricken face looked almost aged. She had long outgrown her dress in height, and yet it hung loosely on her meagre frame; and her feet showed bare through her worn-out boots. It would have puzzled her to tell whether her heart or feet ached most.

"Mother says He hears," she said again, after listlessly watching the people hurry past in the increasing twilight; "but He don't seem to. Well! I shall have to try again. Matches, ma'am? They're only a penny a box, ma'am, and I'll let you have 'em at a ha'penny," pleaded Bessie, running along by the side of a little pleasant-faced woman, already known to us as Kate Castaine, the dressmaker. She was no stranger to distress and poverty, and the entreating tones of the ragged girl touched her, and, in spite of the inclement weather, she paused, and said she would have three of the boxes. The thin fingers closed tightly over the threepenny-bit which Kate gave in payment, and, in a shrill whisper, Bessie said—

"Bless you, lady, for we're starving."

"You and who?" asked Kate.

"Mother," replied Bessie. "She's lame with rheumatics, and work's bad; and it's hard living, things is so dear!"





‘Poor girl!’ said Kate. ‘Come with me and I’ll get you something to eat. Come! I really mean it.’—*A NEEDLE AND THREAD*, page 125.

The gleams of a street-lamp fell upon her as she spoke, and lit up the hungry, eager eyes half hidden by the shawl which covered both head and shoulders.

"Poor girl!" said Kate. "Come with me, and I'll get you something to eat. Come! I really mean it," she repeated, seeing Bessie doubtful and surprised.

Reassured, she followed Kate to the door of a baker's shop, where the latter bought a small loaf and a bun; and giving them to her, with the change of the shilling, bade her good-bye, and turned to proceed. But Bessie caught her dress, and strove to speak. A hard life truly had been hers, brightened by so little good fortune, that the present was almost too much. Her lips moved, but no sound issued from them, until Kate, touching the detaining hand, said again—

"Poor girl!"

Then the spell was broken, and sob after sob burst from her.

"I thought it was all over with us, I did," she gasped; "but mother's right, and He does hear after all."

"Do you mean God?" asked Kate.

"Yes. Mother says He does, but I was most tired of asking, for nothing never came of it. But He's heard at last, and you are the good, kind angel He's sent. Bless you! oh, bless you!"

"What is your name, and where do you live?" asked Kate.

The girl quickly informed her, and the dressmaker promised to come and see them, and tell them more of the prayer-answering God. Then Bessie, thanking her again, set off towards her home as fast as her cold feet could take her. Kate, too, passed on her way, well pleased and full of warm human sympathy. She had put some pence and a few kind words into the Great Savings Bank, where the smallest sums are received and the highest interest returned, on one condition, namely, that all be paid in, in the name of the Master.

Meanwhile, Bessie, with a lightened heart, hastened on. She soon gained the entrance of the court in which she lived, and, running, stumbled over something lying on the path. Recovering herself, she stooped down to feel what it might be, for the entry was but dimly lighted, and, to her surprise, she touched a hand, a tiny chill hand, evidently that of a child. Bessie was naturally a good-hearted girl, and to-night she was particularly disposed to pity all the world—how much more, then, a poor desolate creature like this! In her trouble she had been cheered and befriended by Kate, and with the glamour of that meeting still upon her, she could not leave lost Nell to perish.

Having satisfied herself, therefore, that she was no neighbour's child, she tied her bread and money securely in her scanty dress, and lifting Nell in her arms, carried her through the passage, and up the flight of stone steps, at the top of which her mother rented a room, or, more properly, an attic. Bessie had to rest several times before she reached it. It was truly a poor place. A pitiful little window, with few remaining panes of glass in it, overlooked the court below. In one corner was the bed, or straw and blanket, so called ; and opposite the loosely-hung door was the fireplace. A pallid woman, bending over a shovelful of smouldering ashes, was trying to warm herself, uttering every now and then a sigh of pain. The only light came from the flickering rays of a gas-lamp in the yard. Such was Bessie Harris's home.

"Is that you, Bessie?" said Mrs Harris, sadly, without moving. "You've been gone a weary time ; I'm glad you're back."

"It's me, mother. How are you now?" said Bessie.

"You've had better luck, child ; I hear it in your voice," eagerly exclaimed the mother.

"Yes ; He's heard at last," said the girl, softly laying her burden down upon the straw, and covering it with the blanket. "I was nigh in despair, but I thought I'd ask again ; and sure the words was

hardly in my mind afore a lady comes along the street, and I asked her to buy some of my matches ; and when she looked at me, she said she would ; and then she took me to a shop, and gave me this bread, mother. Oh ! wasn't He good to hear us ? ”

Bessie untied her dress, and put the bread and pence on the table, with many a glance at Nell. Her mother, however, did not notice her, but said, in an agitated manner—

“ He is good. I knew He'd help in time. He ”——

“ Well, but I haven't finished,” interrupted Bessie, hurriedly. “ I told the lady where we lived, and then came on home ; and oh ! mother, just as I got to the court entry, I tumbled over something, and there, it was a bit of a child lying fainted on the stones.”

“ Surely you've never left it there ? ” asked Mrs Harris, quickly. “ Surely, after the Lord's care of us this bitter night, thee hasn't done that ? ”

“ No, mother ; I've fetched her in,” replied Bessie, lighting the end of a thin tallow candle, and sticking it in the neck of a broken bottle. “ Look, here she is ; ” and the weak flame showed Nell lying still and white, her fair hair falling in tangled masses about her.

It was a sad sight, and, forgetful of everything, pain, weakness, and weariness, all the mother in Mrs

Harris was aroused ; and, stooping, she lifted the motionless form in her arms.

"Put all the coals you can find on the fire, Bessie, and boil some water quick. If we starve afterwards, we must try to save her now."

And while Bessie scraped together the dust and scraps their coal-box contained, her mother rocked Nell feebly, and tried to impart to her some of her own warmth. After the girl had re-made the fire, and coaxed out a wee flame or two by vigorous puffing, her mother bid her run and fetch a little milk, which, being heated, they put between Nell's blue lips, until, sighing several times, she somewhat recovered.

"She's coming round, thank God !" said the mother. "Soak some of the bun, maybe she'll eat it ; and then run to Mrs Matthews, Bessie, and ask her to lend you washing-tub to bathe her in. And, Bessie, just cut slice of bread for yourself and me ; I warrant we're both hungry enough."

The girl obeyed, nothing loath ; and during her absence Mrs Harris tenderly loosened Nell's clothes, and wondered not a little at the bruises on her thin arms. A noise outside announced Bessie near at hand, and presently she appeared, triumphantly dragging the extemporised bath. In spite of having an old face, she had only a young heart, and this sheltering of the orphan was a charming excitement.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed, breathlessly. "If this ain't the very queerest day as ever was. Every one is in such a good way. Mrs Matthews, she says, 'What do you want the tub for, Bessie?' 'Oh!' says I, 'for a bath.' 'Deed,' says she, 'I'll lend it to your mother wi' pleasure, and give you what hot water there is in the boiler from the washin', for the fetch-in.' Isn't it strange, mother?—she ain't allers so kind."

"It is, and it isn't, Bessie. You see, when the Lord gives work to do, He gives the means to do it with. So get the water, dear, and thank Mrs Matthews for me."

So did these simple-hearted women take into their keeping, as a gift from God, the poor lost child. It is not in palaces that we find the most unquestioning faith, nor yet amongst those who have read books full of reasons why we should believe in God's infinite providence. No! it is commonest amongst those who live in the poor places of the earth, who, like the sparrows, are dependent pensioners upon the Eternal Father literally for daily bread.

The student looks afar, and, gazing wonder-stricken at the Creator, feels how small a thing he is. But the poor man, often poor in spirit as in substance, never having felt himself great, knows not that he is small, yet continually acknowledges it by his close clasp of the hand of oftentimes his only Friend. "This is too

insignificant a matter to take to God," says the one abased before the Jehovah. "Give us this day our daily bread," says one of the five thousand in the desert—and the bread comes. It might seem a very poor portion if laid on the rich man's table; but is it not better to receive one crumb broken and blessed, than to eat, drink, and be merry, and rejoice in the wealth of our hands unblessed by the Giver?

Before the last fragments of coal, in a borrowed bath, with the water of charity, Nell was washed; but on the shelf, where there was not room for much, lay nearly a loaf, a cup of milk, and about six pennies. Ah! what a delightful sensation pervaded the weary little body as it lay wrapped in the blanket in that motherly embrace! "Surely the King has taken me home," was Nell's dreamy fancy; and she fell asleep smiling quite contented.

On the hearthstone knelt Bessie, lost in admiration, now lifting a lock of the wet shining hair, now rubbing softly the hands, which even she perceived were exquisitely formed.

"Mother," she said at last, under her breath, "if she'd only wings she'd look ready to go straight up. Ain't there something in the Bible about taking in an angel unawares?"

"Yes, but I don't remember rightly about it," replied the mother. "And now, Bessie, I'll lay

her down, and then we'll away to bed. I'm tired out."

"So am I," said Bessie; and soon after the door was barred, the fire extinguished, and she and her mother slept peacefully side by side with the stranger.

When Bessie awoke next morning, the first sunbeams were peeping over the opposite houses, glancing about, and coqueting with, the spouts and chimney-tops. Rising carefully, she dressed; and with deft fingers put together the half-burnt fire of the preceding night, and having with some difficulty rekindled it, she set on their one pan full of water, and taking some of the precious pennies, left the attic. Her mother was up on her return, much refreshed by a better rest than usual.

"Where have you been, Bessie?" she inquired.

"Why, I thought I'd get some tea and sugar to help you to eat the bread," she replied.

"Thank you, dear; but we must be careful of our money, you know."

"Yes, surely; but there'll be more help to-day, mother. I'm sure of it. It's in the air somehow."

Nell still slept heavily, and Bessie was forced to leave her after their breakfast with only a kiss, to go and try to gain purchasers for her matches. When her daughter had departed, Mrs Harris dragged her rickety chair to the window, and sitting down, began

to darn a hole in her gown with the ravellings of a piece of coarse linen. It was by no means an easy thing to do, for her fingers were stiff with rheumatism, and the gown itself was so old and thin that it would scarcely hold the stitches, and so well mended that very small parts of the original stuff remained. It was now a curious specimen of the patching and fine needlework of the nineteenth century.

Patiently, however, she sewed on, with thoughts wandering far from the attic, and tracking their way sadly back through womanhood to girlhood in the old home of the long past.

"Ay! ay!" she said to herself, "I remember as well as if it had been yesterday how we stood by the old mill-dam and plighted our faith—Willie and me; and how he laughed when I told him how I'd always dreamt of him when the ash leaf was under my pillow. There wasn't a lad to compare with him in our country, and we thought no ill of the future. Then came the rainy wedding-day. Ah, me! the days have been mostly rainy since. But I won't murmur; for, in spite of all, he's been a good husband to me, and it's not his fault that he can't get work. He's been gone three weeks come Saturday; maybe he'll"—

Here Mrs Harris was interrupted, for Nell awoke after tossing about restlessly. Rising, she went towards her with the cup of bread-and-milk saved on

the hob beside the now dead fire ; but Nell sprang up, and putting out both hands—half in fear, half in entreaty—cried in a strained, unnatural voice—

“Oh! Aunt Moll, don’t give me to those dreadful men. I will be good ; indeed, I will.”

“Hush, dear! they shan’t have you. Lie down again, dear,” said the kind woman.

The strange tones partly roused Nell. She sat back on the straw, saying, more quietly—

“Blind Joe blessed me, and he said—oh, dear! what was it? There they are, they’re coming, they’ll catch me ; those men will. Oh, Aunt Moll! I will be good, indeed I will, and sing my very best.”

Then Nell tried painfully to sing her ballad. Hour after hour she rambled, mixing up in confusion the events of her short life, constantly pleading not to be sent away, and promising to sing.

What to do her friend could not tell, and Ben was as much puzzled when she came home, having sold all the boxes she had with her, besides receiving some scraps of cold meat and potatoes from a benevolent person.

“What’s the matter with her do you think, mother?”

“I should say she’s been frightened and then taken a chill. All her talk is about her Aunt Moll and soldiers. I can’t make it out quite. You’re going to get some coals are you? Well, if she ain’t better w

you come back, you'll have to fetch a doctor. I'll lay down by her, maybe holding her might quiet her," she continued to herself, when Bessie left her alone.

This was a happy thought. Nell struggled feebly at first, then a sense of protection and safety came over her, her lonely heart yielded to the influence of love, and at last, to Mrs Harris' sincere delight, she fell into another profound slumber.





CHAPTER XI.

THE STRANGER.

OUR story is of Maud Knollis and her pilgrimage, but we cannot entirely overlook her cousin Emmeline, who first roused her to think seriously of God and of herself.

From the day on which she had talked to Maud and had used the mystic, double-edged sword, with everything also had been different. We saw her enter her own room, to choose in its solitude her future course. She had been too well instructed to be in any doubt as to the right or wrong road; neither in the present state of her health was she reluctant to renounce her gay and pleasure-worn life. The real obstacle was a certain moral cowardice, often the heritage of gentle clinging natures when devoid of any strong counterbalancing influence. She quailed

before the light talk, the open jest, the covert laugh, the sharp remark, which her imagination persuaded her must be her share if she turned back out of the Broad Road to seek the Narrow Way. The loneliness of her position added a fresh fear. So entirely had she thrown herself into the world that in her time of need she could think of no one to befriend or advise her, or upon whom she might lean. Little as she knew it, this very friendlessness was her safeguard, for it drove her to the only true Source of strength and wisdom. They were granted, and Lena Lesley resolved to take up her cross, and, join the company going Zionward. She could not hide from herself the fearfulness of her heart, and lacking earthly help, she re-opened her neglected Bible, and, in the light of the East, read therein, not only of condemnation of sin, but of a Father's love and a Brother's sympathy.

“ What though life's way be thorny,
And its path be steep and rough ?
Christ Jesus has passed over it,
And is not that enough ?
Enough to brace my tottering feet,
To inspire my fearful heart,
To mount the hills and breast the floods,
And kiss the sharpest dart ?
Enough, indeed ; no hill can be
The height of Calvary,
No flood so deep as Jesus crossed
In dim Gethsemane.

A NEEDLE AND THREAD.

What stone shall stop, now He' has thrust
The Rock of Death aside?
Captivity was captive led
When He lived who had died.
The thorns made Him a crown of thorns,
Their points broke in His brow ;
His were the open bleeding wounds,
Mine are but scratches now.
Lonely and toil-worn, inch by inch,
Through weary night and day,
Heeding nor taunt nor jest nor frown,
He opened the narrow way—
On to the gates of Paradise,
'Neath the sheathless sword of flame,
He passed with the calm of a conqueror
To a death of glorious shame.
And to follow Him whither He leadeth,
To die in Him on the tree,
To live in His resurrection,
Is the call that He giveth me.
What, then, though life's way be thorny,
Though the path I must tread be rough?
It is stained by the blood of our Saviour,
And that is quite enough."

Once decided, with child-like confidence and
obedience, Lena obeyed ; and as the days came
on, she speedily found that she had indeed
committed herself to One able and willing to pro-
tect and sustain. Never very strong, and now worried
by late hours and excitement, her pale face
attracted mother's attention. In spite of her in-
firmity Lesley loved her younger daughter

and once alarmed, she threw aside, for the time, her worldly ambition. An eminent physician was consulted, who prescribed rest. Lena heard, and submitted willingly, only smiling at her mother's condolences. Her attempts to explain herself were fruitless. Lady Lesley would neither listen nor understand; in fact, she dare not, for religion in her mind was closely connected with melancholy and death. It was hard enough, she considered, to have her daughter's fashionable career arrested during her first season, without having to abandon the hope of its recommencement. Thus was the weak disciple yielded whilst her faith gathered steadfastness and length.

For a few days only was Emmeline missed by her so-called friends; then her place was filled up by some new human butterfly, and she was nearly forgotten. And now came a very weary time. Her nature re-engaged itself for past fatigue. She wanted employment, yet was tired before anything was well begun. He turned at length to the children for amusement, and gained much more than she sought. Entering into their joys and sorrows, she benefited by their experience, and received through them the echo of rank Davids' Sunday teaching. As her health improved, she resumed her music and drawing, determining to fulfil several promises she had made herself

before leaving Hollywood. But the true Christian needs work not centring in self; the study of music and other arts is doubtless perfectly lawful, if made secondary to higher and less perishable labour.

Lena's call soon came. Maud's apparently simple speech, "Lena taught me that," had conveyed more than she was aware of to her friend Frank Davids. On consideration, several other seemingly small remarks recurred to him, and convinced him that Lady Lesley's younger daughter was capable of thoughts far beyond the life which she had been leading.

The very next Thursday, a note was brought to him, which decided him to make an early call in A—de—ley Square. Lady Lesley being troubled by ennui, rather a frequent trouble of hers, was pleased to see him, and entertained him for some time by her soft, endless nothings of gossip. There was Frances Lesley's approaching marriage with Lord de Courcy, in whose family she was then passing a few days; and the enormous debt incurred in the erection of a fine fashionable church to be talked over. There was Mr Danvers's state of health, and that of the Queen and royal family to be discussed. Had not Frank desired to conciliate her, it is to be feared he would not have borne the ordeal so patiently. He waited, therefore, until, having been wafted hither and thither, they were landed at length high and dry on the sand-

bank of photography. Lady Lesley wished to have her visitor's opinion of the last photograph she had had taken of herself. Her only copy of it being in the boudoir, the maid was summoned, and during the pause of expectation, Frank turned to Lena, who had been little more than a passive listener to this conversation, and said—

“Mr Grey and I are somewhat in a difficulty, Miss Emmeline, out of which I think you could help us, should you be inclined.”

“You must tell me more of it, Mr Davids. I dare not make promises in the dark,” replied Lena, looking up brightly from her work, and wondering what was coming.

“I will gladly do so,” he answered. “Mrs Danvers is, as perhaps you know, much interested in three little children in the — Hospital. The lady who undertook to visit them during her absence has, we heard this morning, been called away by the illness of her father. Will you, Miss Emmeline, kindly fill her place for a few weeks. It would be a real help to us, and, I am sure, a great pleasure to Mrs Danvers.”

Before Lena could reply, her mother said, quickly—

“My dear Mr Davids, it is quite out of the question; Lena cannot do anything of the sort. She would be bringing home fevers and illnesses, and alarming me terribly.”

"I think you need not fear on that score, Lady Lesley," said Frank. "These children are in the accident ward, and Mrs Danvers usually takes Lily and Godfrey with her when she goes, and were there any danger of infection, she would certainly not do so."

Lady Lesley offered no further objection, her apprehensions being dissipated for the time at least; but Lena could not be so easily persuaded.

"I fear you have chosen a very poor substitute for Mrs Danvers," she replied, her heart beating faster than ordinarily. "I have never attempted any work of the kind. I fear I am not in the least fitted for it."

Frank smiled as he answered—"The work in itself is so easy, that any one is fitted for it who loves God and little children. It is only to go and speak kindly to them. Will you think of it, Miss Emmeline? If you will do so, I believe I know your decision."

"I still fear you are mistaken in me, Mr Davids. I should not dislike the work, if"—said Lena, hesitating,—“if I could do it.”

"That you can do it, I have not the slightest doubt," said Frank, earnestly, while Lady Lesley was regarding critically the photograph which the maid had just brought her. "Your influence over Maud and her little friends, and their affection for you, prove me right. I will not be denied, Miss Emmeline," he concluded, in a tone half of entreaty, half of command.

"You will be quite out of your element, Lena, teaching sick children," remarked Lady Lesley, petulantly. "Of course I shall not interfere, but it will be rather a singular variety of amusements."

"Indeed, mamma," replied Lena, who was not without a trace of opposition in her character, and secretly wished to accede to Frank's request,—“indeed, mamma, I should not do it for the sake of amusement, but in the hope of being of some use in the world for a short time. I really think I will try. I can but fail,” she added, blushing, and turning to Frank, who immediately said—

"Thank you exceedingly. I am persuaded you will enjoy the work so much as perhaps to refuse to relinquish it. Mrs Danvers will be delighted."

"I hope so," said Lena, smiling, with a wistful expression in her eyes. "I have drawn the line now," she thought to herself, while her mother and Frank were discussing the merits and demerits of the portrait. "I have chosen my side now; may God help me to keep steadfast to it!"

"I have still another request to make, Lady Lesley," said Frank, presently. "I want to carry off your three little folks for the afternoon to the Zoological Gardens or Polytechnic, or elsewhere, according to choice."

"Do you realise what you would undertake, Mr Davids?"

"I believe so," said Frank, in blissful ignorance.

"If you really desire to burden yourself with them, I shall be most happy to allow them the pleasure you propose, on condition, however, that you remain and take luncheon with us. I cannot permit you to have the trouble of a second walk," said her Ladyship, graciously.

Frank thanked her, and after a consultation with his watch, accepted the invitation; and on Lady Lesley offering to send for the children, begged to go and give them a surprise in the schoolroom. On hearing his petition for immediate freedom, Miss Clarke looked doubtful, and Maud stormy and dismal. The brilliant smile with which she had greeted his entrance faded away, and she stared hard at the keys of the piano, for she was in the midst of a music lesson.

"Lily and Godfrey may go at once," said Miss Clarke, adding slowly, "I am very sorry, Mr Davids, but Maud and I have determined to overcome this morning a little difficulty which has tried both of us for a long time."

"But—" exclaimed Maud, with a deep breath and flushing cheeks.

"My dear, I cannot break my word, and you know why," interrupted the governess, kindly but decidedly.

"I will not urge you, Miss Clarke," said Frank ; "but we shall all be very glad if Maud may be excused this time. I'll promise for her diligence to-morrow."

"Oh yes, Miss Clarke, please let me off," pleaded Maud.

"I am very sorry," repeated the lady, "but it cannot be. You have known for several days, my dear, that I expected this passage to be perfectly performed to-day. I believe Maud is satisfied, Mr Davids, that I am only just in this instance."

"If you are just, you are not kind," said Maud to herself ; but her conscience reminded her of a fortnight's patience on Miss Clarke's part, and of negligence on hers, forcing her to confess that the governess had reason to punish her. Nevertheless it was not easy to control her great disappointment and vexation, and the pitying touch of Frank's hand upon her shoulder nearly made her cry.

"Will it take very long to master, Maud?" he asked, sadly grieved for his little friend.

She dared not trust her voice to answer ; but Miss Clarke said for her—

"If we are both quite in earnest, I expect I shall be able to send Maud to you, Mr Davids, in less than half-an-hour."

Now, as Maud sat struggling with herself, Frank's

last allegory darted into her mind, and in another moment her heart had looked up and cried for help. The dew fell upon her, and she said suddenly, through the tears which were dropping fast—

“Yes, I’ll try very hard. It’s my own fault that I cannot come, I know.”

“Cheer up, little soldier! You’ll be a standard-bearer directly,” whispered Frank in her ear, setting propriety at defiance. “We will not detain you, then, Miss Clarke,” he proceeded, aloud; and bidding her good-morning, he, Lily, and Godfrey went away.

“Now, my dear Maud, wait a minute,” said Miss Clarke, kindly, when they were alone. “You are willing to do your best, and I will reward your efforts by pointing out to you several little things in this passage which will render it easier to you.”

Such was our heroine’s first decided victory over self-will, and a more joyous girl than she was, as she danced along the hall to find her friends, could scarcely have existed. She was gladly received, and was instantly over head and ears in plans for the afternoon.

The Polytechnic finally obtained the most votes; and about half-an-hour after luncheon a merry party issued from Lady Lesley’s mansion and proceeded thither. The time passed rapidly, and the short day was drawing in, when Frank declared that they must

return home. Casting many lingering looks behind, they came away. As they were not frequently out so late, they begged that they might walk part of the way, in order to see the shops, which were already being lighted up.

"I think we must take a cab at the next stand," said Frank, after they had gone some distance. "Now, Godfrey, here is a hand for you and another for Lily over this crossing. Be careful, Maud, and keep close to me."

The crossing was a crowded one. They waited for an opportunity.

"Where's Maud?" asked Frank, when he and the two Danvers had safely reached the opposite side.

Knowing her to be very independent, and not in the least timid, it had not occurred to him that she was unaccustomed to London streets.

Maud had sprung forward to follow him as he bade her, but about half way she hesitated and let a carriage pass her, which cut her off from her friends. Undaunted, she darted in front of the next vehicle, only, however, to find a third dashing past her. The danger was imminent, and the noise, together with the dusk and the day's excitement, helped to confuse her. She made another attempt, and would probably have succeeded in gaining the parapet, had not her foot slipped on the treacherous stones. She staggered for-

wards, striving vainly to steady herself. The next minute she must be run over. There was not time to think, when she felt a strong arm catch her, and, uttering a little, unheard cry, her consciousness almost left her.

"Lift her gently," a strangely familiar voice was saying as she partially revived; then a bell tinkled, wheels rumbled close at her ears, and again everything faded away.

A few minutes later, she found herself lying on a dingy, chintz-covered sofa in the back-room of a chemist's shop. A gentleman somewhat past the middle age, with a dark and foreign-looking though handsome countenance was bending over her. Maud needed no second glance or word to tell her who was this stranger.

Meanwhile, where was Frank? On missing Maud, he bade Lily and Godfrey stand perfectly still, whilst he plunged back into the crowded road. He got a glimpse of her just as she slipped, but could not reach her in time to save her. To his inexpressible joy, however, he saw another gentleman, who was immediately behind, rush forward, and seize her firmly with one arm, while with the other he caught the extended hand of the conductor of a heavily-laden omnibus. By a tremendous exertion of strength, and no little skill, the stranger contrived to obtain a foot-

ing for himself and his burden on the step, where, with the help of the conductor, he managed to hold on until the omnibus drove nearer the side and deposited them on the parapet. Seeing her safe for the present, Frank hastened to rejoin the other two children, and this accomplished, he hurried them along in the direction in which Maud had been carried. A small knot of curious people in front of a chemist's shop aided him in his search, and very thankfully he recognised her sitting inside unhurt, and with sparkling eyes though pale cheeks. She let go the stranger's hand when he entered, and jumped up, exclaiming—

“ Oh ! Mr Davids, it is—it is my own dear papa ! ”





CHAPTER XII.

MATCHES OR MUSIC. •

IT was broad daylight when next Nell awoke. Wonderingly she gazed around the room. Where was she, and who were the women talking by the fire?

“Why, mother, she is looking at us, I do declare,” exclaimed Bessie, jumping up hastily.

“Take care, Bessie; don’t startle her? Are you better, dear?” Mrs Harris asked Nell, without moving.

“Where am I?” said the child, in a small, faint voice, which she scarcely recognised as her own.

“You are living with me, dear. You’ve been ill, and I’m taking care of you. Now, you shall have some bread and milk, and go to sleep again.

Nell was too weak to resist. She let Bessie feed her, and then reclosed her weary eyes.

It was some days before she could tell her kind friends much of her history. But they put fragments together, and gradually made out most of it. Nell listened intently to Bessie's account of the evening on which she was found, and was as confident as they that the King had heard their prayers, and given them to each other in answer.

During her recovery, things went on better with the Harrises. The weather became less severe, and Bessie's trade more flourishing. The nearest neighbours, very curious about Nell, came to see her, and were all more or less affected by her sweet face and winning ways. They made her little presents, and were kind in lending and doing what they could. But in spite of these helps it was hard work to live—another mouth to fill was an anxious matter. Thoughts of the workhouse would come into Mrs Harris's mind, though she put them from her. She could not desert the patient little girl. "They must try a bit longer," she said; "perhaps father might have found work, and would be sending help to them." So the days became weeks, and Bessie struggled to keep the fire burning and a loaf on the shelf. Nell meanwhile hardly understood her position. She had been tossed about in the world until she seemed every one's child who should take pity upon her. With unquestioning love she looked up to Mamie, as she called Mrs Harris—repaid her

kindness by kisses and thanks, quite unaware how greatly she added to her friends' difficulties. She had seen plenty of poverty, had been used to hard fare and hard times, in comparison with which the present was perfection. With Jenks and Moll she had spent many a hungry day, but it was the hunger of neglect, not of necessity; there was no particular want of money in Bill Jenks's pockets; so Nell did not comprehend how she and her dear Mamie and Bessie stood day after day on the very threshold of starvation. At length one evening Bessie came home to the miserable attic quite exhausted, and bursting into tears, said she had not sold a single box all day.

"Cheer up, my lass!" said the mother, her heart fainting nevertheless. "We've just enough to put on with to-night, and to-morrow something'll turn up, you'll see."

Bessie shook her head, sadly. "No! no! I'm tired of hoping, and there's the rent for two weeks to pay on Monday. Mother, I guess, we're done now."

"Don't speak so, Bessie," said Mrs Harris, beginning to cry in her turn. "We ain't that bad yet. The Lord'll surely help us in His own good time."

"I can't feel like it. It don't seem as if He cared. Haven't we asked and asked, and nothing comes of it!"

"Oh, Bessie, you'll break my heart if you talk so!

Child, think how you're the only stay I have, and keep up a brave heart. I'm sadly feared your father's come to some harm. It's nigh upon six weeks since he went, and never a word. Oh, Bessie girl, you must hold out or I shall die."

Bessie's only answer was conveyed in louder sobs.

"If we sent her away," continued the mother, glancing at the bed where Nell lay, and not seeing her blue eyes wide open,—“if we sent the poor babe away, I don't think we should be much better off, and I can't somehow make up my mind to it. We took her in as God's gift. Why, you called her an angel sent to us yourself, Bessie ; and I tell you, I dare not part from her. There's a blessing must come to us from the King she talks about so sweetly."

"Ay ! ay !" sighed Bessie, "it's hard lines for us all ; and I'm sure I don't grudge her the bite and sup she has along with us, only it all falls on me."

"I wish I could help you, Bessie ; but look at my poor stiff fingers—they cannot sew, and my knees wouldn't hold me up an hour outside. No, child ; we'll have to ask again. There must be something for us, as well as for the sparrows, that it tells off in the Holy Book ;" and Mrs Harris dried her eyes, and repeated a few favourite verses.

And Nell heard it all. The truth dawned upon her that she was a burden on those she loved most,

and she turned towards the wall and wept. Not noisily, like Bessie, not bitterly, like Mamie, but silently and secretly. A cold pain was aching drearily in her. All the kind generous words she had listened to could not soothe it. A weight of grief lay upon her. In the attic was terrible trouble, and she was the cause of it.

Outside were the March winds, the bare streets, the lonely houses, and the strangers. In all the big wide world there seemed no place for her, no little nook where she might hide herself and be happy.

"Oh! King Jesus," she cried, "won't you take care of us? Mamie has been so good to me, don't let me hurt her; oh! please don't."

"Bless her! I don't think I could send her away, Bessie," said Mrs Harris, pressing the sleeping child to her bosom, when she lay down beside her two hours later, "not even if the worse comes to the worst. She minds me of a little sister of mine who died years ago. She was my pet; we was always together, though she was four years younger nor me. She was fifteen when she took scarlet fever, and was laid by. It was your father, Bessie, that came to comfort me afterwards; we was married that next year; but I can never forget Janet, and I love this baby for her sake. Why, her cheeks are wet with tears, Bessie. I'm afeared she heard us talking."

That night Nell had a dream. She fancied that,

as she lay asleep, the lovely lady of whom she had often dreamt before came to her, and raising her in her arms, bore her through the air, she knew not whither ; and so lovingly and tenderly she held her, that Nell could not be afraid. Softly-spoken words fell from her lips like sunshine ; the sounds were strange, yet the child was, in some mysterious way, aware of their import. No thought of trouble, no remembrance of pain or poverty, entered her heart. The sweet lips touched hers, and told her that she was not forsaken, for the King had sent her own mother to take her to the beautiful Home in the Happy Land. Onwards and upwards they floated, the angel mother and her child, until all at once Nell found herself standing in a garden, where flowers of all colours breathed happiness and perfume, where birds warbled in the trees, and insects hummed songs of praise. Overhead shone the azure heavens, spreading afar in infinite glory into the distance, where they blended for ever with the tremulous blue ocean, whose waves she seemed to hear faintly splashing on the golden shore.

Amidst indescribable beauty, she stood bewildered. A little, bare-footed, ragged girl, yet she felt no fear. Her mother was gone, but in her place was the presence of a Man. Nell knew He was there, though she had no power to look up ; she knew His eyes rested upon

her, though she only saw the shining radiance that cast around. Then in tones sweeter than the angel's, even, she thought she heard Him say, "This is thy home, little Nell, where you shall live and be happy for ever after your work is done. You can sing, down in the great city the poor people want music; you shall go there and sing for Me, and afterwards you shall come back here to live with Me, and never go away again." Nell strove to answer, but in trying everything vanished, and she found herself singing in the streets just as usual. Two men came along; she knew them, and with strengthless limbs turned to follow. As she did so, she was folded and protected by her mother's wings, and a voice, seeming to come from a long, long way off, said, "Fear not, little one; I will take care of thee." Then Nell awoke wondering. She lay perfectly still until the morning, thinking of the dream. The sorrow of last night was gone. She was wrapt in peace, as though her spirit was still enfolded within those sheltering wings. She was too young and simple to analyse her vision, or to put it aside as a tangle of memory. To her it appeared an answer sent on purpose. She knew what to do now. She was to go out fearlessly as the King's little saint. That was the message the dream had brought. She would obey it.

Bessie crept out almost as soon as it was light.

There was no breakfast for any of them unless she could sell some of her boxes.

Mrs Harris and Nell stayed in bed ; it was, on the whole, warmest there, and the last shovelful of coals would, they trusted, be wanted on Bessie's return. Then Nell nestled closer to her Mamie, and began by telling her how she had overheard them talking in the twilight ; how grieved she had been ; and how, after praying to the King for help, there had come a wonderful dream. She related it, interrupted by many kisses from her listener ; and lastly, unfolded her little plan to go and sing for her, as she had done for Jenks and Moll.

"We used to have a deal given, Mamie," she insisted. "Lanty, the monkey-boy, said I was worth a deal."

"I wonder why they wanted to send you away with them bad circus-men ?" said Mrs Harris.

"I don't know, but Lanty said they were frightened to keep me. I don't know why either."

"What if they was to see you in the street singing ?" suggested Mamie.

This horrible thought threatened to frustrate all their designs. The old terror was about to seize Nell, when the dream recurred to her.

"Mamie," she said, decidedly, "the King sent me to sing, and the angel lady'll take care of me. I

know she will. She said I wasn't to be afraid, and I won't be."

"Bless you, my darling! I don't doubt but He'll keep His word."

Mamie also believed that the dream had come to save them.

Strong in her faith, happy in her love, and feeling very important, Little Nell, with Bessie for guide and protector, sallied forth to stand in the gap and ward off starvation. They chose those parts to sing in where there was least chance of meeting Jenks or Moll. They need not even have done so. Had there been a hundred of them seeking her, they would have sought in vain, for the child sang behind a cloud of prayer, which, bright to her, would have baffled them. In reality, Jenks and his wife were miles away. They prowled about a week or two to find their tool, and then turned northwards, comforting themselves by the reflection that they were well rid of her, and would soon find some one else to take her place, and win the money they were too lazy to earn.

"You never did, mother," said Bessie one day. "Why, the folks they do take notice of her sometimes. I 'most forget to hold out the plate for coppers myself, for looking at her and listening."

"Oh, Mamie! I am so happy," exclaimed Nell, warming her cold hands at the fire; for there were

coals now, and the kettle spluttered on the top of them in a charming manner; and flames, real positive flames, issued from between the bars, and danced on the attic walls, papering them with odd figures and gay-colours, and funning with the cracked, faded crockery ready on the round table for tea. The room was home-like, and Nell knew that she was the centre of it, and life began to be more than sorrow to her. She was hollowing out her niche in it, and fighting shadows with songs. And the days came and went; and had it not been for fears about the absent father, the Harris family would have been more than contented.

"It's about time to go home, Nellie," said Bessie, one gloomy afternoon. "It won't do for you to catch cold. You see, I shan't take kindly to the match business after picking up for you."

"There's that pretty new song I've learned," replied Nell, "and then I'll come; but I must finish to-day with 'Home, Sweet Home!'"

Softly the old well-known words fell from her lips, and thinking of the little upper room, Nell sang, almost fervently, "Sweet, sweet home."

The door of a large house nearly opposite opened abruptly, and a gentlemen sprang down the steps towards a brougham just driving off. What made him start so violently, and almost stop? What made the

blood rush so wildly to his heart? What was it chased from him in an instant the gathering twilight, with its loneliness and cold, and called up a picture in which sunshine streamed down gaily from Italian skies, while oleander-trees sighed softly in the summer breeze, and the glow of youth and love in human hearts made the world a paradise? A chance word may remind us of a friend, a chance expression, the form of the eye, the grasp of the hand, the scent of a flower—all these are powerful to recall long gone by joys or sorrows. But nothing brings back our beloved more vividly than the tones of a voice. Thus it was that the old ballad, heard a thousand times before in concert-hall, drawing-room, and street, awakened in that grave stranger a throb of feeling and remembrance nearly insupportable. That childish voice was to him the echo of another, whose silvery tones were not yet silent in his soul.

Throwing the singer a piece of money, he hastened to the carriage, for business of the utmost interest and importance called him away. How little did he guess, when Bessie and Nell were left behind, that his business lay with them! In their keeping lay the secret which would have brightened his life and relieved him of his greatest care and grief. So blindly do we stumble along our paths, so helplessly, so ignorantly seeking afar off what lies within our reach!

The two girls picked up the coin, and wended their way home. A surprise awaited them there. Near Mrs Harris sat a visitor, whose gentle, sympathising face was not unknown to Bessie.

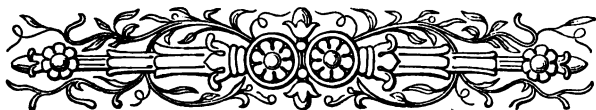
"It's my lady,—my dear lady!" she exclaimed, in delight.

Yes, it was Kate come at last, according to her promise. A long search in spare hours had ended successfully. Already she had won the confidence of Mrs Harris, and soon Bessie's shyness was dispelled. Her unfeigned interest in all they told her unlocked their reserve. She speedily heard the story of their struggles, and Nell's romantic tale also. From that day they were no longer destitute of friends. Kate went to her charity purse, used her nimble fingers, and provided Nell with a decent frock, promising to mention her to a kind lady, who was just then absent from home,—in fact, to Mrs Danvers, who frequently employed Kate as her almoner.

Thus did this sunny-hearted little woman enter the attic, and brighten it by her warmth and cheerfulness. Would that there were more people in this weary world like Kate Castaine! Her happy faith showed itself in a thousand ways. She was not rich,—“only a dressmaker,”—but her hearty gifts and loving words and good deeds will be acknowledged some day by the Lord of the treasury. Out of the fulness of her

own sense of God's love through His Son Jesus Christ, she gave forth to others. As the odour of the rose exhaled into the air betrays its presence, and invites the passer-by to admire and smell, so the faith of a Christian should make itself known by the train of good works, without which it is imperfect and dead. Receiving all from Christ,—forgiveness, holiness, eternal life,—is it possible that we should not even desire to show our gratitude and love—by imparting to our fellow-creatures what we can of those favours so graciously and freely bestowed upon us?





CHAPTER XIII.

HOPING AGAINST HOPE.

“**Y**OU can't think what it is, Lily, to have a papa come home after such a long time,” said Maud to her little friend as they lay wide-awake in their pretty beds the night of Major Knollis's return. “It would be perfect happiness if only poor Gabriella were here. Papa is so dreadfully unhappy about her. Why, Lily, do you know, this evening, when Aunt Lesley was speaking of her, he actually cried.”

“How sad!” said Lily, in a low voice. “I don't think I ever saw my papa cry. But is your little sister Gabriella dead, Maud? Do you mind telling me?”

The gentleman who had saved Maud's life some few hours before was indeed her father. A great

trouble had brought him unexpectedly back to England, and of this trouble the two children were talking.

Edward Knollis was Lady Lesley's only brother. Being early possessed by a desire to enter the army, a commission was bought for him, and he eventually went to India, where he rose to the rank of major. The failure of his health, however, induced him to sell out; and quitting the far East, he indulged his taste for travel by a long overland journey. During his wanderings he met a young Italian lady, whose beauty and talents so charmed him, that, in spite of some difference in rank, and the poverty which obliged her to use her voice as a means of independence, he loved and married her.

The union was not approved of by his English relatives; and, unwilling to expose her to their haughty coldness, he bought a lovely villa at Nice, and there lived surrounded by every enjoyment. Business connected with the estate at Knollislea occasionally recalled him to England, there being no quarrel between him and his father, only a coolness, which the son had determined to end by bringing about a meeting between him and his daughter-in-law and two little grandchildren, when, to his great grief, the project was defeated by the sudden death of the elder Mr Knollis. A second trial awaited him, for,

on his return to Nice, after the funeral, he found a sad alteration in his wife. In the midst of all her happiness, overpowered, as it were, by the very sun she worshipped, the beautiful Italian faded. She grew restless, though oppressed by a wearying languor; she begged for change, yet had scarcely strength for the fatigue. Major Knollis yielded to her every wish; and the little Maud and Gabriella, in charge of their faithful nurse Justine, were sent to England to stay with their Aunt Lesley until their mother was stronger.

Letting the pretty villa, they journeyed from place to place in search of health and rest, neither of which were ever found on earth; and laying her sorrowfully in the English cemetery at M——, Major Knollis merely wrote to beg his sister still to watch over and protect his now motherless children, and then again turned his face eastwards, to seek amidst the distractions of foreign lands consolation and forgetfulness. Letters from time to time told of his whereabouts, until at last one announced him as on the point of starting on an expedition into the interior of Africa, desiring that all communications should be sent to Cairo, whence they would be forwarded to him as opportunity occurred. It was, therefore, on his return to that city, after a prolonged and dangerous tour, that he learned how urgently he was needed in Eng-

land Taking the first ship, he did not even wait to send word of his coming ; and thus it was that he reappeared so suddenly.

"I should like to tell you all about Gabriella very much," said Maud, in answer to Lily's request.

"Please do," begged Lily again.

"I was between four and five," began Maud, "when Ella was born ; we all lived at Nice then, and were so happy. Mamma was very beautiful, you know ; and Ella, as we used to call her, was too, only her eyes were blue, and mamma's were black ; and her hair was the colour of gold. Oh ! Lily, I can't tell you what a lovely dear little creature she was. But in one way she was like mamma, for she had such a wonderful voice—she could sing as soon as she could talk. She knew lots of little songs, and used to sing them so sweetly when mamma began to be ill, and we had to come to England to Aunt Lesley."

"Did your mamma sing?" asked Lily.

"Indeed she did ; we seemed to breathe in music sometimes. Oh ! I shall never forget my mamma. When she became ill, she didn't sing much, but it amused her to teach Ella, and it was no more trouble to her to repeat what was sung to her, than for me to chase butterflies. Well, about three or four years ago, we came to Hollywood. I don't think aunt was much pleased ; I do not know why, you know, but I

fancy so. I do not mean that she was not kind, but we didn't have any one to talk to or love, but Justine, for Lena was nearly always in school with her governess. One day Ella couldn't be found anywhere. We searched and searched, but we could not find her then, and we never have yet, Lily."

"Oh! Maud, how very, very dreadful!" exclaimed Lily, ready to mingle her tears with those of her friend, which could no longer be restrained.

"It was evening when we missed her," continued Maud, drying her eyes. "Justine and I thought she was with aunt, and aunt thought she was with us. She had been in the drawing-room during the afternoon, but ran out of the window on to the lawn, saying she was coming to us. She didn't, however. How I wish she had! Well, there's a river along the end of the Hollywood gardens, with terraces running down to it. We had been forbidden to go there; and the undergardener saw her sitting on the bank under the trees, playing with her doll. He thought she was quite safe, so he didn't come to tell us, but went home to his tea."

"Was she drowned then, Maud?" asked Lily, in a timid whisper.

"That's just what we don't know, Lily—that's the horror of it. Perhaps she fell in, but they couldn't find her, and the river is not very swift in the summer-time, nor very deep neither."

"What could have become of her, then?"

"Why, if she was not drowned," said Maud, resolutely, "somebody must have stolen her. Oh! how we all talked, and wondered, and questioned! I can't bear to think of it. It is quite possible, you know, that some tramps heard her singing, and took her away with them; for the road is near just where she was seen last."

"And have you never heard anything of her since?" asked Lily.

"No, never," sighed Maud. "Aunt Lesley was so distressed and frightened, that she could not tell us what to do, and that lost time, so the real search did not begin until the next day."

After a pause of sympathetic silence, Lily observed—

"And did your papa never know she was lost till quite lately?"

"You see, the letters could not be forwarded to him, and he never expected anything of the kind to happen. Besides, he did not intend to be away so long when he went."

"Is he going to seek for Ella again?"

"Yes, indeed he is," answered Maud. "He came here about an hour after we were gone this afternoon, and he had been about it this very evening, when he saved me from being run over. Oh! Lily,

Wasn't it beautiful of God to let my own papa save me? I think He's so kind, that, if Ella is alive, He'll let us find her. Don't you?"

"I'm sure I hope He will; but mamma says we must always ask Him for anything we wish," said Lily.

"I have asked Him, Lily, and I shall again," replied Maud, adding, with a sigh, "Papa doesn't hope much, he is so dreadfully unhappy."

"Dear Maudie, don't cry," said Lily. "I do wish I could comfort you."

The two girls kissed each other affectionately, and soon afterwards their hot, excited hearts and heads grew calm under the soft influence of sleep. And Major Knollis? It is indeed difficult to describe his grief. Bitterly he reproached himself for having left his children, sure that, had he been with them, such a misfortune would not have happened. His regret was mixed with impatience, and even rebellion, against the Providence who had permitted the sorrow. Ceaselessly he mourned his darling, and anxiously and untiringly he sought her. Was she dead or lost? If the former, then all was in vain. If the latter, even with the chance of her recovery, the father groaned at the thought of what that tender little creature might have passed through during those three years. "Better that she were dead," he said sometimes in his agony; but the uncertainty remained undiminished, continued

expectation, never-ending suspense. "We may hear of her before night," rang dreary changes with, "we may be news of her in the morning." Before long, trouble others paled. It is uncertainty which undermines nature slowly but surely, lining the face with bringing grey hairs, and bending the tall form to the dust. Of all trials this is the most terrible. The real, the known, the certain, we must meet, must conquer; but its opposite can only be stayed by its deadly creeping path by that patient trust called faith. Endless inquiries were made, ten rewards offered, but the weary weeks slipped by, and trace of the wanderer was found, and the searchers began to make up their minds that she had drowned.

At length, all but the father and sister believed this; they alone were still unconvinced and unfixed.

"Don't give her up yet, dear papa," pleaded the mother. So more advertisements were posted up in the towns, and larger rewards offered.

"Lost! about three years ago, in the county of Oxford, a little girl aged five, fair hair and complexion and blue eyes; has a sweet voice, and is fond of singing. Any one restoring her to her friends, or affording any clue towards her recovery, will," etc., etc.

Such a description met the eyes of many thousand

in our land, and, amongst others, those of a quiet-looking woman marketing in Northampton.

"She answers to it sure enough," she soliloquised, after reading the words several times. "I'd best tell what I know. I wish I'd done it long ago, as I said I would to them bad people."

Quickly entering the police-office, on whose walls she had observed the announcement, she stated her errand, and was ordered to return the following day. That night Major Knollis and the detective he had employed started for Northampton, and were soon put in possession of all our old acquaintance, Mrs Bray, could tell them.

She related how her husband, an English mechanic, having gone over with some fellow-workmen to Paris, had fallen ill and sent for her, and how a long and painful sickness had ended in his death, and left her an almost penniless widow, and the mother of helpless twin babies. While crossing from Havre to London, she had met with a child corresponding to the advertisement. In fact, Mrs Bray gave a full account of Nell, the ballad-singer, and ended by blaming herself for not having at once fulfilled her threat of seeking her out.

"You see, sirs, the dear child's answers to my questions was so unsatisfactory, and the folk she was with treated her so badly, that I was suspicious; but what

with one thing and another, I've never said nor done nothing till now."

It was impossible to avoid being interested in the little street-singer she described, but her story gave small foundation for hope. She had met a child of eight years old and fair complexion, who sang prettily, and knew next to nothing of her history or belongings. Alas! hundreds such as she cross our paths yearly—waifs and strays, whose memories, weakened by ill-usage and hardship, would fail them as hers had done. As a father, Major Knollis was inclined to seek this one and rescue her; as a man, he smiled at his own credulity in fancying she might be his lost Ella. He thanked Mrs Bray, and promising to let her know if anything should be heard of Nell, made her a handsome present, and returned to London. There more news awaited him. The very day of his journey, a boy stood with his hands in his ragged pockets, whistling reflectively in front of a bill posted up on a boarding covered with advertisements. He was a bright-eyed fellow, and good-looking in spite of an unwashed face. From beneath the least tattered side of his jacket the nose of a monkey peeped now and then.

Evidently the young master was much perplexed, and at last, to aid his wits, took off his cap and rubbed his thick hair up and down, until some of it quite stood on end. A hand laid heavily upon his shoulder

made him half turn, and exclaim, as the grim visage of his natural enemy, a policeman, faced him—

“Hands off now! I ain’t doin’ nothin’ but mediatin’, as the cat said when they caught her kissin’ a fish.”

“None of your chaff,” replied the man. “I’ll be bound it’s only mischief you’re mediatin’, as you say. Come, out with it! Do you know anything about this here that you’ve been staring at?” and he pointed to one of the advertisements.

“I’ve heern tell,” remarked Lanty, wriggling to escape,—“I’ve heern tell as how every gen’leman ’ll be a scholar in futur’ times; but my edication ’as been neglected, as the papers says, and I ain’t got larnin’ enough to circumwent them ere little black marks.”

The policeman’s eyes twinkled, and he answered, mysteriously—

“I wasn’t born yesterday.”

“I reckon not,” said Lanty, giving him a sharp covert glance, which ended in his adding, confidentially, “Come on, Bobby, and I’ll make a friend of ye. I don’t know as how I can’t tell summat about that un—the £100 reward un. D’y’e see, I was standin’ here, and heard a chap spelling of it out, about a little gal as is lost. There’s a pictur’ of her like given. Now, if any larned gen’leman ’ll read it again, I guess I could speak up.”

Swallowing Lanty's bait, the policeman cleared his throat, and in a large voice delivered himself of the same advertisement which had attracted Mrs Bray. The interest in the lad's face deepened while he listened.

"That's her, sure enough," he muttered.

"What do you know about it?" asked the other.

"I'm thinking as how I'll give my evidence at a proper time and place, as the judge ordered my twenty-fourth cousin on my mother's side next week. I warn't born long after you, Bobby."

"That you weren't," gruffly replied the policeman, giving him a cuff for his impudence, before marching him off to the nearest office.

.

"There's the brougham at last!" cried Maud, after an hour's watch at a front window.

"A man has been here inquiring if you had returned, papa, and wishing to see you immediately," she continued, breathlessly, bounding into the hall to meet Major Knollis.

Signing to the coachman to stop, he merely asked two or three necessary questions, and then hastily returned to the carriage, and ordered it to the address given. As he ran down the steps, a singularly sweet voice almost arrested him; a rush of memories came

over him ; but, intent on the business in hand, he threw the singer a coin, and sprang into the brougham, which immediately drove off.

Lanty's story was soon heard, and fitted so exactly to that of Mrs Bray, that the father's heart beat fast, and a conviction took possession of him that Nell was his lost Ella. With quivering lips the stern soldier and traveller listened to the boy's praises of her beauty, and sweetness, and innocence. In a roundabout but honest way he repeated a conversation that he had overheard between Jenks and Moll one night when they supposed themselves alone. Agreeing that it was unsafe to keep Nell longer with them, they resolved to pass her for a certain number of years to the masters of an itinerant circus. Lanty, knowing these men to be thoroughly bad and cruel, and pitying Nell, whose kindness had touched him, told how he had warned her to beware, and how her terror had led her to run away. Finding himself suspected, he had followed her example, and had only come back to London a few days before that on which he heard the advertisement read, and was reminded by it of his little friend.

The detective, after hearing all this, though not willing to commit himself as to the identity of Nell and Ella, was nevertheless of opinion that, in default

of better, this clue was worth following up. There was something mysterious in this child which it might be as well to fathom.

Whilst the search is thus progressing, we must return to Maud and the Lesleys. The former was again alone. Lily and Godfrey had gone to rejoin their parents. Letters flew between the two girls. Lily was eager to hear, and Maud to tell, all passing events of importance.

Another epistle, in a compound of roundhand and pointed, had arrived the very day of Lanty's evidence.

"Papa is so much better," wrote Lily, "that we are coming home in a few days. We are all longing to hear of Ella, and mamma sends her love to Lena, and says she wants to thank her very much for being so kind to the children at the hospital."

The first visit, with Godfrey and a scrap-book, had been the forerunner of many others. Lena gladly continued her work of love, and became so interested in the children, that she did not cease caring for them when they were discharged. Gradually she enlarged her labours, and the useless gay life she had led for a while became a thing of the past. Lady Lesley demurred somewhat, but at last yielded to Lena's wishes, and resigned herself to the change which her daughter no longer hesitated to avow decidedly.

Indeed, to tell the truth, her Ladyship was not altogether sorry to rest from her duties as chaperone. And except that Lena was destroying her hope of a fashionable marriage like that of Frances, she was more than willing to remain quietly in her grand house, sympathising with her brother, and working endless couvrettes for chairs and sofas.

Frank Davids still found reasons for frequent calls, and was so cheerful and encouraging as to be always welcome. Major Knollis especially felt his influence.

"I cannot think," he observed to his sister one day, "what it is gives that young Davids such a power over one. He refreshes one like a draught of fresh spring-water."

"He is certainly an excellent young man," replied Lady Lesley. "There are few like him. He seems to have a wide influence for good, yet he makes no fuss, as though all the machinery of the parish would be overthrown were he not the mainspring."

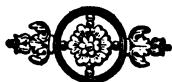
"What do you think of him, Lena?" asked the Major, mischievously of his favourite niece.

"I, uncle?" replied Lena, laughing and blushing over the flowers she was arranging. "I think he's very good, you know; but I am not sure that his hair is not sandy, and certainly his nose is not aristocratic."

"Well, well, little woman! I suppose you are like the rest of your sex, and think only of externals."

Lena looked up quickly to reply, when a hasty knock was heard at the door, and Justine rushed into the room, breathless, panting, and flushed.

“Oh ! monsieur,” she gasped, “de little one, de little one !”





CHAPTER XIV,

A DOOR AJAR.

“**I**T has struck twelve ever so long ago, and she hasn’t come yet, Mamie. Do you think she has forgotten?”

“No, my pet,” replied Mrs Harris, fondly ; “she’ll be here very soon now.”

“How many seconds did you say made a minute, Mamie?—was it sixty?” asked little Nell again.

“Yes, sixty,” said Mamie, smiling.

“But are you sure? for I’ve counted sixty over and over until I’m quite tired, and waited in between, and the quarter hasn’t chimed.”

“I’m sure I’m right, dear, so you must try and wait patiently.”

Nell sighed, and strove to see out of the mended window into the court below.

The quarter sounded, and again "our Nellie" sighed; such a sigh indeed, that it had to be finished off quickly long before its natural end, for there was a step outside, and the latch creaked suggestively. The pink deepened in the pearly cheeks; all sorts of delicate lines and curves showed more plainly in Nell's sweet face, and curled into a smile of welcome. Kate had come at last!

"I am late, I fear," she said, kissing the child's upturned lips.

"Only a quarter of an hour or so, Miss Castaine," replied Mrs Harris.

"It seemed far longer to me," whispered Nell; "but I don't mind now."

"I'm very sorry you had to wait, dear; we'll make up for it though directly, you'll see. How are you to-day, Mrs Harris?"

"I'm feeling a bit better to-day, thank you, Miss Castaine. I've had something this morning which was grand medicine."

"A letter from your husband, I guess?" said Kate.

"Yes, ma'am, just a few lines. He says as how he's got work at last for a month or six weeks. He's been very ill since he left us. He got a job helping some bricklayers, and his head was dizzy like, and he fell off the scaffolding, and was dreadful hurt. That's why we've never heard of him this long while."

"He's well again now, I hope?" said Kate.

"Yes, ma'am, I trust so. You see, he ain't much of a letter-writer, so he don't say much; but I hope, as he's at work again, he'll be spared."

"Well, I'm very glad you've heard. Now you must cheer up, and make extra haste to get stronger. Where is Bessie?"

"She's gone out with a few boxes of matches as we had left. She thought she'd get rid on them to-day while our Nellie was with you."

"Very good," said Kate. "I hope to come and have a talk with her in a few days; she must have something better to do than selling matches. Yes, yes; I quite understand, Nellie, that you think it is time we were on the move," she added, in answer to a faint pull of her hand towards the door. "Good-bye, Mrs Harris. I'll bring Nellie back some time this evening."

"Good-bye, Mamie dear,—my own Mamie!" exclaimed Nell, leaving Kate to spring into her friend's outstretched arms, and give her a final embrace.

As it was so late, Kate hailed the first omnibus going their way, and Nell sat therein, with hands and feet pressed tightly together, in a fever of delight.

"Now then, little lady, I'll lift ye hout," said the conductor. "She's a sweet un," he muttered, giving

her a last glance as the omnibus rattled off, and left her and Kate to walk down the side-street in which the dressmaker lodged.

Was there a spell about the child? or was it the sheen of her angel mother's wings reflected on her, which caused so many hearts to cherish her?

With shy joy she followed Kate Castaine into what appeared to her to be a very grand house, and upstairs to the rooms she rented.

Divested of her tidy jacket and hat,—Kate's present,—she sat down on a low chair, and was in reality—as Jane, the maid-of-all-work, declared she looked—as happy as a Robin Redbreast. While the dressmaker was removing her walking things, Jane reappeared with the dinner in a covered dish, carrying it in both hands together with the two ends of her apron, in whose depths a round, soft something rolled about restlessly, to which the girl frequently said, in low but commanding accents, “Whishte, whishte!”

How Nell found out that this uneasy captive had anything to do with her, is a mystery. But she was quite sure it had, and watched expectantly the cautious placing of the dish on the table.

“You'd maybe like to see what I've got here?” the maid remarked.

“I should very much indeed,” replied Nell, advancing for a peep.

"Whishte, whishte, will te?" whispered Jane, vehemently. "Was there ever such a hanimal?"

As she spoke a small black paw made its way over the edge of the prison, then a second, and lastly, with a heart-rending me-ew, a round head and two bright staring eyes. A moment's victory! Jane jerked the blue-checked wall; the captive disappeared; and the struggle recommenced in the calico valley. With an exclamation of delight, Nell thrust in a hand, and seized the prize.

"Mrs Keans thinks as you'll like to nurse her kitten while you're here, Miss Nellie," said Jane, letting fall the empty apron, and smiling radiantly at the sight of Nell's pleasure.

"'Birds of a feather flock together,'" said Kate, when she entered her sitting-room and saw the child and the kitten. They were playmates already, the little creature rolled and jumped and capered as only kittens can, and Nellie clapped her hands with joy. What a fright that was for her black toy! with arched back, bristling hair, erect tail, and wild, yellow eyes, it stood a minute in horror and alarm, then, as if in utter contempt of its own silliness, twirled suddenly about, and relieved its irritated sensibilities by a leap and a scamper round the room.

Nellie laughed and Kate laughed, and who shall say the kitten was not laughing too? Grim old science

will shake the head and exclaim, "Impossible!" but we know better, and remark aside, that although the whiskers may interfere with a smile of pussy's lips, laughter is nevertheless plainly expressed in the remarkable movements of the tail peculiar to frolicsome kittenhood. It would have been very difficult for Nell to have told any one of what her mid-day meal consisted that day. It might have been of the kitten itself, had she not had visible and tangible proof to the contrary. Kate at length declared it was possessed; and so it was, by the very spirit of fun, and its merri-ment was highly contagious. Bill Jenks and Moll would not have recognised their pallid prima donna in the lovely child who played in the spring sunshine of that third-storey room. But even a kitten's limbs may grow weary.

"All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," and all play and no sleep makes a kitten a dull cat. The furry black darling had no wish to lose her character for mischief just yet, time enough to be sedate a year hence. So she climbed into Nellie's lap, and after sundry apologies in the shape of winks and yawns, shut her eyes for a nap. Nell of course was also obliged to remain quiet; she took her chair to the window, and gazed up into the greyish-blue sky too contented even to think. Meanwhile Kate put away the *dinner*, and, seeing her inclined to be still, went for

a while into her second room. Thus Nell was alone ; an intense desire to sing, born of her wonderful happiness, came over her. She glanced at the door, it was almost closed, there was no one near to hear her.

At first the sounds issued faintly, but presently she gained confidence ; the soft notes rose and fell, the soul of the little singer welcomed the charm of its great talent, and lost itself in its own melody. No gaping children stood by—no necessity to gain money lay upon her ; here there were no pennies to pick up, nor crowds to disturb. The kitten was the sleepy audience, the necessity the fulness of a blythe heart, and the gain her own simple guileless pleasure. No listeners ! Whose are those two faces peeping through the crack of the door ? One is that of a tall, thin-featured woman. Wonder, surprise, doubt, delight, are all depicted on her countenance. One hand rests against the door, arrested in the very act of opening it ; the other is raised to urge silence on the second woman, Kate Castaine.

No suspicion of their presence troubled Nell. She was engrossed by the music and the heavens. She had sung several of her favourite ballads. What should she sing next ? The kitten stretched itself and purred dreamily. Nell smiled to herself—some subtle force was working in her. Her clouded memory stirred half wakened, and a long-forgotten ditty entered her

"Was I too sudden?" questioned Kate.

As she did so, the brilliant colour partly died away; and bursting into tears, Nell threw herself on Kate's bosom, and sobbed out—

"Oh, I remember!—I am Ella!"

Kate let the passion of tears have its way a few minutes, for the child seemed stunned in spite of her care, talking meanwhile gently of her papa and Maud and Justine, and how they were longing to find her.

"So dry your tears, darling, and we will go to them. Hark! there's a cab Justine has sent stopping at the front door. You are going home, little Ella, to be loved and petted."

With trembling haste she was made ready. She began to recover herself now, and to understand what had happened. One remembrance after another was recurring to her, and she could scarcely sit quiet an instant in the cab which carried her and Kate home.

One short half-hour later, the wayfarer Nell was no more; in her place Ella nestled with shy love in her father's arms, and thence bestowed kisses and smiles on her rejoicing family. By and by she related what she could remember of her adventures. Indistinctly she recalled being lured away from Hollywood by a woman whom she believed to be Moll. Much of *her story* of the last three months was already known,

and Ella exulted in the hope of again meeting her dear steamboat friend and the monkey-boy, Lanty.

"We'll send Lanty to school, Ella, and have him taught a trade," said Major Knollis, as they chatted together in the evening.

"And Mamie, papa?" whispered Ella, using the word so coyly and softly that tears started to his eyes.

"I hardly know what we must do for her. We must think of something very nice indeed. Tomorrow you and I and Maud will all go and visit her. I long to see the home which has sheltered my treasure, as well as this good woman and her daughter."

"Kate Castaine said she should go to see her this evening, and tell her who Nell really is. How is it you never saw the advertisements about yourself, Ella?" asked Maud.

"I can't read," said Ella, reddening.

"Never mind; you'll learn directly," responded Maud, pirouetting in transports. "Oh! I am so happy!"

"And so am I," said Ella, clinging afresh to her father. "I have asked the King to make me so such lots of times, and so He has. Blind Joe said He would, because He loves me so."

"We must truly thank Him with all our hearts," said Major Knollis.

"Yes, indeed, I do now," said Maud. "Oh! this is a happy day! You'll never be miserable again, Ella, and I shall have a sister, and never be lonely any more!"

"And I," said their father, "shall have two darling daughters to love and watch over."

"Then you are going to keep us with you, papa?" asked Maud.

"Yes; we will all go home together to Knollislea, and strive there to prove our thankfulness by being good and holy and serving God."

"But Ella must see Lily and Godfrey first," said Maud.

"And we cannot allow you to desert us immediately, Edward," remarked Lady Lesley from her couch on the other side of the fire.

"There are long days to come, I trust, and time in which to meet our many friends and tire kind aunts with our noise. Eh! Ella? Can you make a noise, or have you grown too sober?"

"She'll never be like me," laughed Maud, before her sister could answer. "I'll soon teach her to play, though."

"So you shall, Maud," said Major Knollis, heartily; and very thoroughly was this permission enjoyed.

During the next fortnight lessons were put aside, and the days spent in visiting old and new friends

and sight-seeing. Their first call was upon poor Mrs Harris. The old attic looked very strange filled by its visitors, for Major Knollis kept his word, and insisted on going in person to thank Ella's protectress. He gazed at the bare grey walls, at the small dim window, and the rusty grate, and pressed his child more closely to him. Mrs Harris felt very nervous and frightened, until Ella sprang towards her, calling her "Mamie," and proving herself to be, by word and deed, the same little Nell whom she had rescued, in spite of outward differences.

The grateful father thanked her warmly.

"He had not as yet," he said, "determined how to reward her; but for the present she must quit this desolate abode for one more home-like, and accept of help from him. Very probably, Mrs Harris," he concluded, "I shall be able to find work for your husband at Knollislea, in which case it will be best for you and Bessie to remove there. We shall soon provide you with a pretty cottage to live in."

Mrs Harris could not express her gratitude, her heart was too full for speech.

"Just to think, Bessie, of our going to the country," she said, when Major Knollis and his children were gone. "Ah! lass, I scarce dare believe my senses. That sweet child has indeed brought us a blessing. You were not far wrong when you called her an angel."

Ella was now in some danger of being spoiled. Aunt and cousins vied with father and sister in petting and caressing her. The little wanderer was speedily accustomed to the change in her life, and fell into her place so easily, that it evidently belonged to her. Her gentle nature bloomed beneath the tender care now surrounding her, but remained childlike and unaffected as ever. The sisters dearly loved one another. Ella clung to Maud, looking to her for protection and affection; while Maud, without a moment's jealousy of the rank Ella's romantic life had given, was devoted to her. They sympathised most particularly in their desire to be really good. As time went on, the younger child spoke in her innocent way of the loving-kindness of the King, and how He had cared for her in her loneliness, had guarded her from harm and loved her—"her very own self." And the directness and simplicity of her faith communicated itself to the elder one. Maud gradually received into her heart the sense of His great love to her; and the God who had hitherto seemed to her rather a strict Master, she learned to regard as a Father and Friend. In her turn, by her ardent determination to be good, she aroused in Ella the wish to show by her life her gratitude for the King's mercy. Thus they aided each other to live *the beautiful old story of faith and works.* The

willingness to receive all things from God, and the willingness to give themselves up to His service as reconciled children in return.

In this we are looking forward somewhat into their after lives. Yet, even in childhood, Ella's faith was provoked by Maud's energy to blossom into action, and Maud's longing to be and to do good was drawn by her sister's trust to spring, not from the fear of God's wrath, nor the hope of winning heaven, but from earnest love and gratitude to the Saviour.

At length the time arrived for them to quit London and go to Knollislea. Every one who had befriended Nell had been thanked and rewarded by Ella. She had met Lanty again. He came to see her in grand style, with new clothes on, and such a clean face, that he was scarcely recognisable. Blind Joe also had been sought out, and encouraged in his labour of love. The Harris family were to follow them in a few weeks, and Mrs Bray and her babies were to be visited on the way home. Still it was not quite unalloyed pleasure. There were friends to part from. Very heartily they regretted the necessity of saying good-bye to Lily and Godfrey Danvers and kind Frank Davids. Lady Lesley and her daughters had decided to return to Hollywood, in order to make preparations for the marriage of Frances.

Yorkshire seemed a long way off to the children,

and the meeting again indefinite and shadowy. There were tears as well as smiles on the sisters' faces when Frank waved them farewell as the train carried them away from the London terminus. But what matter a few showers in April?





CHAPTER XV.

THREADED AT LAST.

THE spring-time had departed, with its soft green tints, its showers and sunshine. Summer in its turn had blessed the land, fulfilling the fair promises of its predecessor, until, fading slowly in its dusty garments, it also yielded up its place, and the autumn breezes rustled in the trees and hedgerows, and blew with a singing sigh across each patch of ripening grain.

The pimpernel, the poor man's weather-glass, lifted its gay, starlike eye, and grew amongst the roughest clods of earth. The bright blue corn-flower and wild red poppy peeped up here and there, as though suspicious of the fast-approaching sickle, then bent their fragile stalks in homage to the coming conquerors. Along the time-dimmed roadsides the tiny heart's-

ease, which withers at a touch, smiled and bloomed in freedom, glancing cheerfully from amidst the dusky grass to whisper to the wayfarer a tale of love and hope.

It is written, "In the evening-time there shall be light." Thus, before the winter comes to hush to rest all nature till another spring, the kind, unselfish autumn hastens to our aid, colours the leaves all shades of red and gold, brings the richest fruits, and hides from us in a thousand ways the lengthening shadows of decay, and in its glowing sunsets bears us afar in chariots of rays through the great central gulf into the heart of the blue invisible which knows no death.

Merrily singing their harvest-songs, the sturdy Yorkshire labourers reaped the corn, and stood it up in sheaves to die of sunshine. Dashing down from the distant fells, over which Ingleborough brooded in silent majesty, the Lea-syke gurgled in its rocky bed, amongst meadows and cornfields, through woods and glades, past scattered homesteads, and the Castle on the hillside, to the village of Knollislea, whence, after sundry turns and twists, it flowed on, still laughing, to swell some larger river, and plunge itself in another life.

Through the low white gate opening from the Castle gardens to the stream, two children ran gaily

to its mossy banks, and across a shallow part, where, between well-worn stepping-stones, the water danced and foamed in a mock fury.

"Be careful, Ella darling," cried the elder, looking back, and stretching out a helping hand.

"No, thank you, Maud," returned the younger. "I like to skip over best by myself."

On the opposite side the two walked more quietly, a lovely pair! No wonder they were the pride of Knollislea. Their white dresses were symbols of their innocence and purity, and the blue ribbons which floated round them in the autumn wind, of their happiness and peace. Maud's eyes still shone with a dark fire, but the expression of discontent had vanished; and Ella was like nothing, save the sky above her head, where the very clouds were only breaths of joy.

No such thoughts as these troubled our little heroines; they had far more important things to think about. They reached the Dell, a grassy road winding beneath overhanging trees. Leaves fluttered noiselessly to their cool beds, willing and ready to cover the parent roots warm and snug before the winter. Already the robin's note was easily distinguishable; the other feathered songsters were meditating a flight southwards, and collecting in flocks to consult and choose a leader.

At the end of the Dell, and on the outskirts of the village, stood the vicarage, whither Maud and Ella were going. Surely that is an acquaintance of ours on the lawn?

"Let us creep upon him, and give him a surprise," whispered Maud. "He doesn't see us coming; he's reading."

Ella consented, and they stole through the gate on tip-toe, and across the soundless turf. But they had not reckoned on their shadows. These fell upon the book, and darkened its pages. The reader did not stir,—he would not spoil the transparent little game. The children advanced cautiously, then bounded suddenly to his feet.

Frank Davids shouted, "Thieves! To the rescue!" and seized an intruder with each hand.

"What is it, my son?" inquired a lady sitting within an open window.

"Only these mischievous fairies, Maud and Ella, mother, wanting to discover what sort of nerves I have," answered Frank, adding sternly to his captives, "What have you to say for yourselves before I order you off to the pound for straying on my property?"

"Papa has sent us with a message," laughed Maud, "and if you do not let us go, I shall not give it; and that will be worse for you than putting us into the pound."

"What do you say, Ella?" asked Frank.

"I say we'll tell you at once, and then you'll repent of treating us so savagely," said the little girl. "Papa wants to know," she continued, "if you will go with us to the station this afternoon? You really, really must."

"Why so very particularly?" asked Frank, again.

Ella hesitated, and Maud replied quickly—

"Because you will be glad if you do, and sorry if you don't."

"That's no answer," said the gentleman. "I see you'll have to go to the pound yet, or be shut up in the Castle dungeon."

"Put your head low down, and I'll whisper why," said Ella.

The effect of the secret was immediate. Frank's laziness fled before it, and rising, he accompanied the two girls into the house to see Mrs Davids.

"Mother," he said, seating himself near her, "Ella has given us some pleasant news."

"I know, Frank; I hear it in your voice: our sweet Emmeline is coming."

"You guess all my secrets, mother, almost before I know them myself," said her son, reverently.

"Yes, Lena is coming with the Danvers this afternoon," put in Maud.

After a little more conversation, the children rose to return home.

"We, that is, Ella and I," observed Maud, on the door-step, "are going in the pony-carriage with Robert, and Lily and Godfrey will come back with us. You elder ones are to have the open carriage, and then will come Nurse Graham and the cart with the luggage. Oh! won't it be a glorious cavalcade?" she exulted. "Don't be late; we start at half-past four. The train arrives at 5."

"I'll not miss," said Frank. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" echoed the children. "Good-bye, Mrs Davids."

"I'm sure, Ella," continued Maud, as they walked back, "I do not know who I shall be most glad to see, Lily, or Godfrey, or Lena. It will be nice when Lena comes to live at the vicarage, won't it? When Mr and Mrs Danvers go away again, I shall wish the time to pass quickly until the New Year."

"So shall I," replied Ella. "Are we really going to be bridesmaids do you think, Maud?"

"I'm not quite sure, though very nearly, for you see Cousin Frank has no sisters. I'm forced to call him cousin, though I suppose he's not a proper cousin yet; but Mr Davids sounds so stiff, and one cannot quite call him Frank," added Maud, reflectively.

"Where is Aunt Lesley going to live after Lena is married?" asked Ella, presently.

"She has not decided, so far as I know. I am rather afraid, Ella, that she may come to us ; at least, to stay a long time. It won't be so nice as having papa all to ourselves."

"She's very kind, Maud," responded Ella.

"Yes," said Maud, but her tone was not satisfied.

"She will be very lonely when Lena is gone ; she loves her so very much. Perhaps it might make her happier to live with us."

"You little dear!" said her sister, throwing her arm affectionately around her, "you don't know what it is to be selfish. I have such a horrid temper. Well, if papa would like Aunt Lesley to live at the Castle, I will try to love her, and not mind. But come along, Ella ; there's papa talking to William Harris on the terrace ; let us be quick and reach him before he goes into the house. Here, wave your hat, Yes, he sees us, and is coming down to the white gate."

On ran the two girls, arriving breathless at the stream.

"Oh ! papa," cried Maud, "Cousin Frank was so surprised ; he hadn't guessed one bit that we had asked Lena to come. Lena had kept it a secret, as we asked her. Oh ! dear, I wish it was five o'clock."

"What an impatient little daughter it is !" said

Major Knollis, fondly. "Now, here's a wee flower on my other side," he continued, looking down into Ella's blue eyes upraised to his, "who can wait for anything, even for five o'clock, and a house full of dear friends."

Ella said nothing. She thought, however, that, possessing the love of a father and sister, it should not be difficult to wait for the one drop more which was steaming rapidly towards them from London.

"I have had some news since you went to the vicarage, Ella," said Major Knollis, as they neared the house.

"News, papa! What of?"

"Of some people who made part of a little girl's life very unhappy."

"You have heard of Jenks and Moll, papa," interrupted Maud.

"Yes, I have. Don't tremble, my Ella; you are quite safe. They have been secured, and are in prison."

"For stealing me, papa?" asked Ella.

"No, my pet; for some crime committed since you left them."

"Papa," said Ella, after a pause, "do you think I shall have to see them again?"

"I hope not. Why?"

"If they are sorry, papa, shouldn't I go and tell

them I forgive them. I am so happy now, I can't feel angry with them, and perhaps they didn't know any better."

The father's eyes glistened.

"Ella," he replied, almost solemnly, "if I can hear that your going to see them will do them any good, or lead them to repent of their wickedness, you shall go and try to touch their hearts."

"I am sure God would like us to forgive them and be kind," said Ella, quietly; "and I have asked Him to make them good so often, that I think He will."

"God answers our prayers in many ways, my child; and if you feel that this is an answer to yours, you shall carry it out according to your own ideas."

"Thank you, dear papa," said Ella, gratefully. "Perhaps God has let them be caught and put in prison that they might think about Him and be sorry. Cousin Frank said, the other day, we were to remember when we asked God for anything, and expect an answer; so I think perhaps this is one."

Major Knollis stooped to kiss the lovely, earnest face, and blessed God for the straightforward faith of his little girl.

"Luncheon is quite ready, papa, if you will come," said Maud, who, having quitted them a few minutes before, now re-appeared on the steps of the modern mansion, which still bore its ancient name of "Castle,"

in deference to the aged, ivy-covered keep, the only relic of the original building which the civil wars had left standing.

"You are to dine late, with the rest of us this evening, I suppose, Maud?" said Major Knollis, entering.

"Yes, please, papa; we wish to very much. Mrs Deborah promised us she would manage to make room."

Shortly after four o'clock, Frank Davids arrived, and the two gentlemen walked up and down the lawn talking, whilst the little girls prepared themselves for the drive to the nearest station, some three miles distant.

Further acquaintance with Frank had only strengthened the Major's high opinion of him, and the living of Knollislea falling vacant during the spring, he offered it to him. Frank accepted it with sincere pleasure, and had been settled in the vicarage a month or so when our story recommences. Of course, with such a lovely home, he needed a wife, and where, he asked himself, could he find any one so perfect as Lena Lesley?

Lena's efforts to serve the Father who had forgiven and blessed her had not ended in the hospital, but had spread from it as a centre. Her life truly had not been a smooth one lately. She had had again and again to overcome her mother's worldly regrets,

and to bear sharp and disagreeable words from Frances, and not a little covert ridicule from acquaintances who had formerly made her many a flattering speech. Frequently she failed in her endeavours after holiness, and frequently her courage well-nigh fainted, but she struggled for good foothold on the narrow path; and now she was to be aided by an earthly friend, and encouraged by the affection and companionship of another pilgrim travelling Zionwards. She had toiled on perseveringly and prayerfully, amidst the temptations of fashion and forgetfulness in the haunts of the world; now, after a little pause, would come the harder trial to walk on amidst the temptations of prosperity in the sycamore-shaded vicarage. In the immediate present, therefore, all our friends were gazing on a future of sunlight; stormy days were doubtless hidden somewhere, but the morrow which brought them would meet them: so the two carriages which left Knollis Castle that afternoon contained very happy, hopeful people.

Maud and Ella in the phaeton, reached the little country station first, and at once began to promenade the platform.

"Suppose Lena should not have met them safely?"

"Suppose they should have missed the train anywhere, and don't come, Ella? My brain reels with

suppositions, as Aunt Lesley would say," cried Maud, excitedly.

"What a wild state you are in, Maud!" said the quieter Ella. "Don't think such dreadful things."

"There! I do believe I hear the train coming. Let us run to the end and look," exclaimed her sister.

Off they darted to gaze down the line and try to gain a glimpse of it past the bend.

"It must be late," Maud exclaimed. "Is not the train due?" she asked of a porter. "Do you think there has been an accident?"

The man, although much amused, answered, respectfully—

"It's near about her time, miss. See," he added, pointing to the signal, "she's in the next station, and will be here in three or four minutes."

"Thank you," said Maud. "Three or four minutes! and papa and cousin Frank are not here yet!"

"Well, you are fidgety, Maud," laughed Ella; and as she spoke, the carriage dashed up outside, and Major Knollis and Frank joined the children.

Having strained their eyes for nearly a quarter of an hour in vain, Maud and Ella were of course taken by surprise when the train really did appear. Before it stopped, handkerchiefs were waving from little hands, and the welcome commenced; and when the travellers descended, a perfect Babel

of greetings, and kissings, and laughter, and anxieties ensued. Where was the luggage? what was it like? etc., etc. Such an arrival was quite an event in the station-master's career, and he and his two porters hurried about trying to be everywhere and do everything for everybody at once.

Then the engine gave a warning puff, a frantic jerk, and finally set off again, and was soon out of sight.

"Come, Lillas, come Godfrey; we children are to go home in the phaeton," exclaimed Maud, leading the way.

"Oh, Ella!" pleaded Godfrey, "do you think I may sit in front, where I can see the horse?"

"Yes, you and I will sit with Robert, and Lily and Maud behind," answered Ella.

"I doubt we'll have to go slow, miss," said Robert, good-naturedly viewing his young party.

"So much the better, Robert; we don't mind, if you can squeeze us all into such a bit of a carriage," said Maud.

"It was Ella's birthday present from papa, Lily, and the pony was mine. Isn't it sweet?"

"Indeed it is," said Lily, enthusiastically.

"Now, Miss Ella, you want to be in front, and this little master here," said Robert; "jump in then. Steady, Roger," he added to the pretty white pony; "though sure enough, if you want to run away, you'd best start at once, before we're all behind you."

"You'll like to take the reins presently, sir, I dare say," said the kind-hearted man to Godfrey, noticing his eagerness.

"I should indeed," was the little fellow's reply. To sit so close to a horse was charming, but to actually drive one was beyond every past experience of bliss to the city boy.

The Major and his guests easily overtook the phaeton, and rolled swiftly by. Mr and Mrs Danvers faced Major Knollis and Lena, while Frank sat on the box, conversing over his shoulder with the others.

Mr Danvers still looked ill and worn, though much stronger than in the spring. He was now about to have another short rest before taking possession of a smaller parish on the south coast. It had been a great trial for him to leave his London charge, but the doctors were peremptory, and he was forced to obey.

Passing through the village, Major Knollis pointed out the various places of importance, such as the market, with its ancient sundial, the reading-room for the work-people, the prim little bank, the church and adjacent schoolhouse. Just coming from beneath its trellised porch was an intelligent, tidy-looking girl. She curtsied and blushed on seeing the party in the carriage, and receiving a bow from Mrs Danvers and Lena.

"How wonderfully changed Bessie Harris is!" remarked the latter.

"Yes," replied her uncle. "I am glad to say she is promising well in every respect. I was going to put her under my housekeeper, Mrs Deborah, but Frank interfered."

"Certainly," put in that gentleman; "I wanted her in the school. If she goes on as she has begun, she will make a valuable teacher."

"It is early days to speak of her teaching, is it not?" asked Mrs Danvers.

"With regard to mere learning, it may be so for a while still, Mrs Danvers; but it is her gentleness and influence which are needed. The present schoolmistress is a real old dame, and the village children none of the quietest. Bessie moves amongst them like oil, and keeps all the various wheels at work more cheerfully."

"Why, there is Mrs Harris!" said Lena, smiling, and bowing to a woman who stood at the wide-open lodge-gates. "Her husband is one of the gardeners now—is he not, uncle?"

"Yes; I found he had a very creditable knowledge of plants. He is an industrious man, though far from strong," replied the Major.

Outside the great gates, Mrs Harris stood and listened to the voices of the children in the distance. Bessie joined her mother, and both gazed down the

long avenue of tall trees, through whose falling foliage the sunset rays were stealing brightly.

Creeping up the slight rise came the phaeton, Robert strolling beside it, having given the reins to Godfrey, who, with extended arms and countenance of extreme gravity, drove the real live pony.

"Bless 'em!" said Mrs Harris, when the children also had disappeared along the drive, and the gates were being closed for the night. "It does me a power of good to hear such kind words and see such sweet faces. I always feel a singing in my heart, Bessie, lass, when our Nellie calls me 'Mamie.' She's a rich little lady now, but she don't forget how we sheltered her in her distress. May God bless her, I say, and all of 'em!"

"Ay! ay!" responded her husband from the doorstep of their comfortable cottage home.

"And He will, mother, I'm sure He will," echoed Bessie, as she put down the last bolt.

Threaded at last? Yes, dear reader.

The story ends where *the story* begins. Maud and Ella, by the help of their Heavenly Father, have drawn the thrice-twisted Thread of Love through the Needle of Salvation, and already the fine, well-tempered point of Faith is balancing itself to do good work.

Do you wonder what sort of work our heroines would do? Nothing very startling nor extraordinary; nothing that the young girl-friend who reads these pages could not herself accomplish. They had to begin at the beginning, and do little things; to put, as it were, one small stitch after another into the life-work. Not a few had to be taken back and wept over; and those which remained were badly done, and badly planned, and all uneven; yet it was good work, because they did it for God, and because His Holy Spirit guided them.

Not all at once does any child of God become a skilful workman; yet such is the Father's love, that He will accept the feeblest attempt tendered to Him in His Son's name. Even the best is faulty; but the Father looks not at the work, for His eye searches out its motive. He knows the measure of the suffering, the weariness, the self-denial of the heart that made it. He sees the sorrow that it is so poor and frail an offering, and marks the faith that brings it, nevertheless, to lay it at His feet.

What matter if the work you place there do not appear to you so striking or so beautiful, so large or worthy, as that of some other fellow-servant? What matter is it, if only God can smile, and say of you—"She hath done what she could?" We may not carry our earthly jealousies and weaknesses into

the courts of heaven, and this is a difficult lesson for the sons of men. There are quick and slow learners in the Higher school as well as in our lower ones. Maud Knollis was eager and impatient, and often sighed for some great thing to do, by which to prove her loyalty and love ; but alas ! whilst building castles of future deeds of spiritual valour, she was apt to miss present opportunities, and fail in present, every-day duties. Ella, more humble and more child-like, learned more readily that it is not by strength of resolution, nor by sighs and wishes, that faith can be renewed, or good works performed ; but that it is by looking at the love of God upon the Cross on Calvary, and letting that love take full possession of the heart by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that we can alone receive power to be good and useful servants, willing to do anything, whether great or small, whether it be seen and acknowledged by those around, or of the countless number of those hidden acts which are known only to the Master.

Love is an active principle, and must work ; and love is born of faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour.

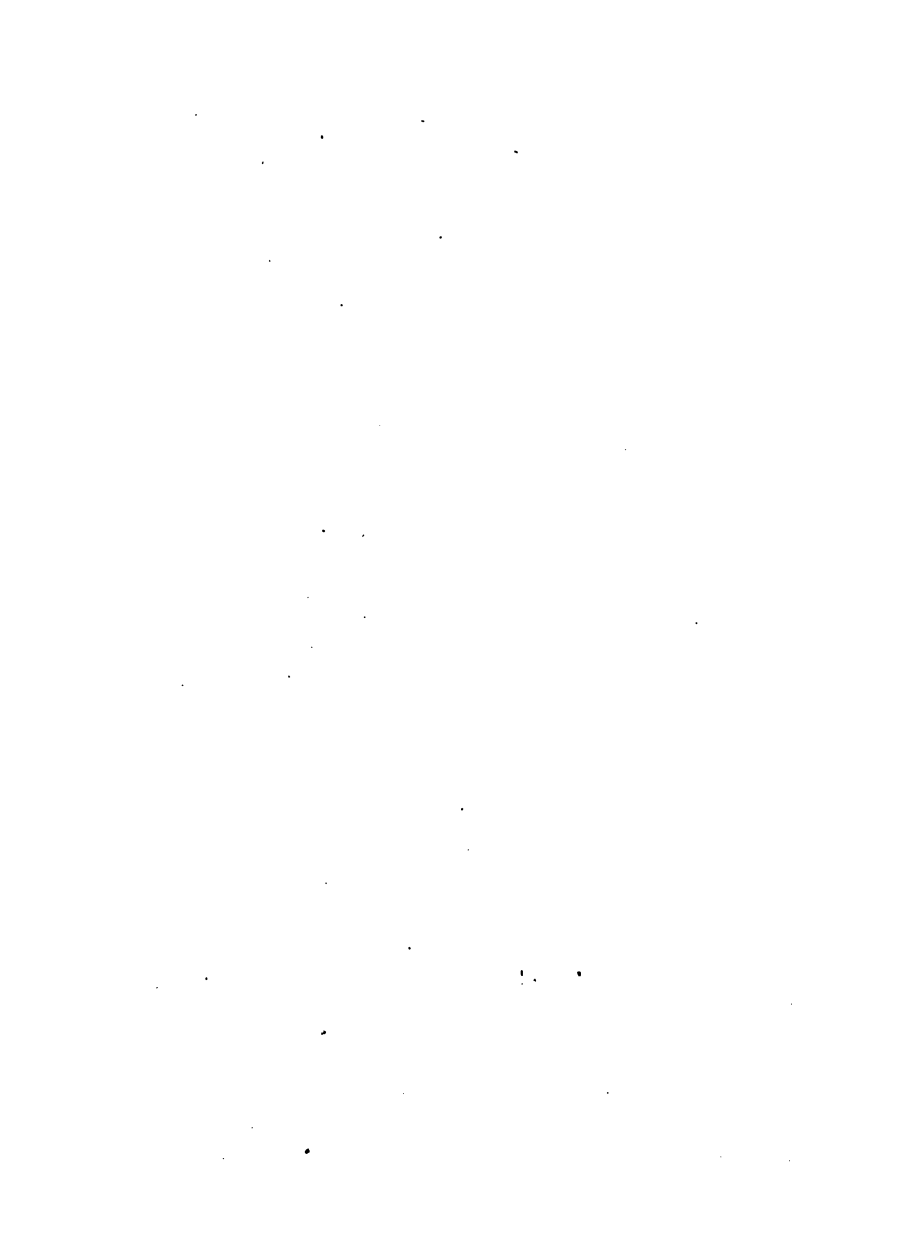
We cannot follow *the sisters* further ; but unless they let the needle come unthreaded, their real *story* will end like its picture, only with infinite more glory and truth ; for the faithful Thread will guide them, making stitch by stitch in the work of life within the

portals of that true Home, where happiness inconceivable, and reward unutterable, await the patient worker.

Reader! have you also caught the Thread, and drawn it through the Needle?







A SELECTION FROM CATALOGUE
OF
Popular and Standard Books

PUBLISHED BY

WILLIAM P. NIMMO, EDINBURGH.

*** Complete Catalogue of Mr. NIMMO's Publications, choicely printed and elegantly bound, suitable for the Library, Presentation, and School Prizes, etc. etc., will be forwarded gratis, post free, on application.

'Mr. Nimmo's books are well known as marvels of cheapness, elegance, and sterling worth.'—OBSERVER.

Just ready, in fcap. 8vo, toned paper,
Entirely New Cloth Binding, in various Emblematic Designs worked in Gold and Black, price 3s 6d.
Entirely New Morocco Bindings, in antique raised, at 6s. 6d., and in extra raised, with high-class Medallion Portraits on side, at 7s. 6d.

NIMMO'S POPULAR EDITION
OF
THE WORKS OF THE POETS.

In fcap. 8vo, printed on toned paper, elegantly bound in cloth extra, with various emblematic designs worked in gold and black, price 3s. 6d. each or in morocco antique, price 6s. 6d. each; or morocco extra, raised and with high-class medallion portraits on side, entirely new design, price 7s. 6d. each. Each Volume contains a Memoir, and is illustrated with a Portrait of the Author engraved on Steel, and numerous full-page Illustrations or Wood, from designs by eminent Artists; also beautiful Illuminated Title-page

1. LONGFELLOW'S POETICAL WORKS.
2. SCOTT'S POETICAL WORKS.
3. BYRON'S POETICAL WORKS.
4. MOORE'S POETICAL WORKS.
5. WORDSWORTH'S POETICAL WORKS.

[Continued on next page]

NIMMO'S POPULAR EDITION OF THE
WORKS OF THE POETS,
CONTINUED.



6. COWPER'S POETICAL WORKS.
7. MILTON'S POETICAL WORKS.
8. THOMSON'S POETICAL WORKS.
9. GOLDSMITH'S CHOICE WORKS.
10. POPE'S POETICAL WORKS.
11. BURNS'S POETICAL WORKS.
12. THE CASQUET OF GEMS. Choice Selections
from the Poets.
13. THE BOOK OF HUMOROUS POETRY.
14. BALLADS: Scottish and English.
15. THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE. Two Vols.
16. THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS. Two Vols.
17. BUNYAN'S PILGRIM'S PROGRESS AND HOLY WAR.
18. LIVES OF THE BRITISH POETS.
19. THE PROSE WORKS OF ROBERT BURNS.



* * This Series of Books, from the very superior manner in which it is produced, is at once the cheapest and handsomest edition of the Poets in the market. The volumes form elegant and appropriate Presents as School Prizes and Gift-Books, either in cloth or morocco.

'They are a marvel of cheapness, some of the volumes extending to as many as 700, and even 900, pages, printed on toned paper in a beautifully clear type. Add to this, that they are profusely illustrated with wood engravings, are elegantly and tastefully bound, and that they are published at 3s. 6d. each, and our recommendation of them is complete.'—*Scotsman*.

NIMMO'S SELECT LIBRARY.

New Series of Choice Books, beautifully printed on superfine paper, profusely Illustrated with original Engravings by the first Artists, and elegantly bound in cloth and gold, large crown 8vo, price 5s. each.

SECOND EDITION.

1. **Almost Faultless: A Story of the Present Day.** By the Author of 'A Book for Governesses.'

'The author has written a capital story in a high moral tone.'—*The Court Journal*.

SECOND EDITION.

2. **Lives of Old English Worthies before the Conquest.** By W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

'The author's aim is to illuminate, what may be regarded as obscure, certain periods of historic England, accompanied with biographical sketches. The book is beautifully bound and printed, and cannot fail to command popular support.'—*Courant*.

SECOND EDITION.

3. **Every-Day Objects; or, Picturesque Aspects of Natural History.** By W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

'As an introduction to heavier works, by awakening in the youthful understanding a taste for knowledge in natural science, and giving them a brief but clear insight into the why and the wherefore of much they wonder at, this book will serve a very useful purpose.'—*The Examiner*.

THIRD EDITION.

4. **My Schoolboy Friends: A Story of Whitminster Grammar School.** By ASCOTT R. HORN, Author of 'A Book about Dominies,' 'Stories of School Life,' etc.

'"My Schoolboy Friends" is a most interesting book. It has many attractive qualities, which are sure to win for it a wide and lasting popularity among the best sort of readers. Boys, for whom it is especially written, will thoroughly enjoy it.'—*Westminster Review*.

SECOND EDITION.

5. **Drifted and Sifted: A Domestic Chronicle of the Seventeenth Century.**

'The author of this interesting, and we may add pathetic, story appears to possess the art of reproducing bygone times with much ability.'—*The Record*.

NIMMO'S FIVE SHILLING ILLUSTRATED GIFT BOOKS.

Crown 8vo, beautifully printed on superfine paper, profusely illustrated by eminent Artists, and richly bound in cloth and gold, and gilt edges, price 5s. each.

SECOND EDITION.

1. **Sword and Pen; or, English Worthies in the Reign of Elizabeth.** By W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

'A more wholesome book for young readers we have seldom seen.'—*The Athenæum*.

SECOND EDITION.

2. **Norrie Seton; or, Driven to Sea.** By Mrs. George Cupples, Author of 'Unexpected Pleasures,' etc.

'Mrs. Cupples has given to the boys in this volume just the sort of sea-story with which they will be delighted.'—*The Scotsman*.

SECOND EDITION.

3. **The Circle of the Year; or, Studies of Nature and Pictures of the Seasons.** By W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS.

'Its purpose is to tell both young and old, but especially the former, how much of interest there is in everything connected with nature.'—*Bell's Messenger*.

SECOND EDITION.

4. **The Wealth of Nature: Our Food Supplies from the Vegetable Kingdom.** By the Rev. JOHN MONTGOMERY, A.M.

'It would be difficult to put into the hands of any boy or girl a volume which more equally combines the instructive and interesting in literature.'—*N. B. Mail*.

FOURTH EDITION.

5. **Stories of School Life.** By Ascott B. Hope.
6. **Stories of French School Life.** By Ascott B. Hope.

'We were among the many who greatly admired Mr. Hope's "Stories of School Life" and "Stories about Boys," and when we found that he had undertaken to illustrate French school life, we gladly opened the volume. The stories are interesting in the highest degree; they appeal to the best sympathies of the lads for whom they are written. They set forth the right and the true against the false, and they are full of good, hearty humour.'—*Public Opinion*.

NIMMO'S UNIVERSAL GIFT BOOKS.

A Series of excellent Works, profusely Illustrated with original Engravings by the first Artists, choicely printed on superfine paper, and elegantly bound in cloth and gold, and gilt edges, crown 8vo, price 3s. 6d. each.

1. **Rupert Rochester, the Banker's Son. A Tale.** By WINIFRED TAYLOR, Author of 'Story of Two Lives,' etc.
2. **The Story of Two Lives ; or, The Trials of Wealth and Poverty.** By WINIFRED TAYLOR, Author of 'Rupert Rochester,' etc.
3. **The Lost Father ; or, Cecilia's Triumph. A Story of our own Day.** By DARYL HOLME.
4. **Christian Osborne's Friends.** By Mrs. Harriet Miller DAVIDSON, Author of 'Isobel Jardine's History,' and Daughter of the late Hugh Miller.
5. **Tales of Old English 'Life ; or, Pictures of the Periods.** By WILLIAM FRANCIS COLLIER, LL.D., Author of 'History of English Literature,' etc.
6. **The Young Mountaineer ; or, Frank Miller's Lot in Life.** The Story of a Swiss Boy. By DARYL HOLME.
7. **Mungo Park's Life and Travels.** With a Supplementary Chapter, detailing the results of recent Discovery in Africa.
8. **The Spanish Inquisition : Its Heroes and Martyrs.** By JANET GORDON, Author of 'Champions of the Reformation,' etc.
9. **Wisdom, Wit, and Allegory.** Selected from 'The Spectator.'
10. **Benjamin Franklin : A Biography.** From the celebrated 'Life' by JARED SPARKS, and the more recent and extensive 'Life and Times' by JAMES PARTON.
11. **Wallace, the Hero of Scotland : A Biography.** By JAMES PATERSON.
12. **Epoch Men, and the Results of their Lives.** By Samuel NEIL.

[Continued on next page.]

NIMMO'S UNIVERSAL GIFT BOOKS—continued.

- ~~~~~
13. **The Mirror of Character.** Selected from the Writings of OVERBURY, EARLE, and BUTLER.
 14. **Men of History.** By Eminent Writers.
 . The object of the Editor in preparing this book for the public is a twofold one: first, to exhibit views of the world's great men; and, second, to present these views in the best words of the best authors.
 15. **Old-World Worthies; or, Classical Biography.** Selected from PLUTARCH'S LIVES.
 16. **Women of History.** By Eminent Writers.
 . This volume is a further development of the idea which suggested the companion volume, 'Men of History.'
 17. **The Improvement of the Mind.** By Isaac Watts, D.D.
 18. **The Man of Business considered in Six Aspects.** A Book for Young Men.
 19. **Stories about Boys.** By ASCOTT R. HOPE, Author of 'Stories of School Life,' 'My Schoolboy Friends,' etc. etc.
 20. **Violet Rivers; or, Loyal to Duty.** A Tale for Girls. By WINIFRED TAYLOR, Author of 'Story of Two Lives,' etc.
 21. **The Twins of Saint-Marcell: A Tale of Paris Incendie.** By Mrs. A. S. ORR, Author of 'The Roseville Family,' etc. etc.
 22. **George's Enemies: A Sequel to 'My Schoolboy Friends.'** By ASCOTT R. HOPE, Author of 'Stories about Boys,' etc. etc.
 23. **Round the Grange Farm; or, Good Old Times.** By JEAN L. WATSON, Author of 'Bygone Days in our Village,' etc.
 24. **Friendly Fairies; or, Once upon a Time.**
- ~~~~~

. This elegant and useful Series of Books has been specially prepared for School and College Prizes: they are, however, equally suitable for General Presentation. In selecting the works for this Series, the aim of the Publisher has been to produce books of a permanent value, interesting in manner and instructive in matter—books that youth will read eagerly and with profit, and which will be found equally attractive in after-life.

Books published by William B. Nimmo.

NIMMO'S HALF-CROWN REWARD BOOKS.

Extra foolscap 8vo, cloth elegant, gilt edges, Illustrated,
price 2s. 6d. each.

- ~~~~~
1. **Memorable Wars of Scotland.** By Patrick Fraser Tytler, F.R.S.E., Author of 'The History of Scotland,' etc.
 2. **Seeing the World: A Young Sailor's own Story.** By CHARLES NORDHOFF, Author of 'The Young Man-of-War's-Man.'
 3. **The Martyr Missionary: Five Years in China.** By Rev. CHARLES P. BUSH, M.A.
 4. **My New Home: A Woman's Diary.**
 5. **Home Heroines: Tales for Girls.** By T. S. Arthur, Author of 'Life's Crosses,' etc.
 6. **Lessons from Women's Lives.** By Sarah J. Hale.
 7. **The Roseville Family. A Historical Tale of the Eighteenth Century.** By Mrs. A. S. ORR, Author of 'Mountain Patriots,' etc.
 8. **Leah. A Tale of Ancient Palestine.** Illustrative of the Story of Naaman the Syrian. By Mrs. A. S. ORR.
 9. **Champions of the Reformation: The Stories of their Lives.** By JANET GORDON.
 10. **The History of Two Wanderers; or, Cast Adrift.**
 11. **Beattie's Poetical Works.**
 12. **The Vicar of Wakefield.** By Oliver Goldsmith.
 13. **Edgar Allan Poe's Poetical Works.**
 14. **The Miner's Son, and Margaret Vernon.** By M. M. POLLARD, Author of 'The Minister's Daughter,' etc. etc.
 15. **How Frank began to Climb the Ladder, and the Friends who lent him a hand.** By CHARLES BRUCE, Author of 'Lame Felix,' etc.

NIMMO'S TWO SHILLING REWARD BOOKS.

Foolscap 8vo, Illustrated, elegantly bound in cloth extra, bevelled boards, gilt back and sides, gilt edges, price 2s. each.

1. **The Far North: Explorations in the Arctic Regions.**
By ELISHA KENT KANE, M.D., Commander, Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin.
2. **The Young Men of the Bible. A Series of Papers, Biographical and Suggestive.** By Rev. JOSEPH A. COLLIER.
3. **The Blade and the Ear: A Book for Young Men.**
4. **Monarchs of Ocean: Columbus and Cook. Two Narratives of Maritime Discovery.**
5. **Life's Crosses, and How to Meet them. Tales for Girls.** By T. S. ARTHUR.
6. **A Father's Legacy to his Daughters, etc. A Book for Young Women.** By Dr. GREGORY.
7. **Great Men of European History. From the Beginning of the Christian Era till the Present Time.** By DAVID PRYDE, M.A.
8. **Mountain Patriots. A Tale of the Reformation in Savoy.** By Mrs. A. S. ORR.
9. **Labours of Love. A Tale for the Young.** By WINIFRED TAYLOR.
10. **Mossdale. A Tale for the Young.** By Anna M. De LONGH.
11. **The Standard-Bearer. A Tale of the Times of Constantine the Great.** By ELLEN PALMER.
12. **Jacqueline. A Story of the Reformation in Holland.** By Mrs. HARDY (JANET GORDON).
13. **Lame Felix. A Book for Boys. Full of Proverb and Story.** By CHARLES BRUCE.
14. **Picture Lessons by the Divine Teacher; or, Illustrations of the Parables of our Lord.** By PETER GRANT, D.D.
15. **Nonna: A Story of the Days of Julian the Apostate.** By ELLEN PALMER.
16. **Philip Walton; or, Light at Last.** By the Author of 'Meta Frantz,' etc.
17. **The Minister's Daughter, and Old Anthony's Will. Tales for the Young.** By M. M. POLLARD.
18. **The Two Sisters.** By M. M. POLLARD, Author of 'The Miner's Son,' etc. etc.

NIMMO'S EIGHTEENPENNY REWARD BOOKS.

Demy 18mo, Illustrated, cloth extra, gilt edges, price 1s. 6d. each.

~~~~~

1. **The Vicar of Wakefield. Poems and Essays.** By Oliver GOLDSMITH.
  2. **Æsop's Fables, with Instructive Applications.** By Dr. CROXALL.
  3. **Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.**
  4. **The Young Man-of-War's-Man: A Boy's Voyage round the World.** By CHARLES NORDHOFF, Author of 'Seeing the World.'
  5. **The Treasury of Anecdote: Moral and Religious.**
  6. **The Boy's Own Workshop; or, The Young Carpenters.** By JACOB ABBOTT.
  7. **The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe.**
  8. **The History of Sandford and Merton. A Moral and Instructive Lesson for Young Persons.**
  9. **Evenings at Home; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened.** Consisting of a variety of Miscellaneous Pieces for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Persons. By Dr. AIKIN and Mrs. BARBAULD.
  10. **Unexpected Pleasures; or, Left alone in the Holidays.** By Mrs. GEORGE CUPPLES, Author of 'Norrie Seton,' etc.
- ~~~~~

\* \* The above Series of elegant and useful books is specially prepared for the entertainment and instruction of young persons.

## NIMMO'S SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARD BOOKS.

Foolscap 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges, Illustrated, price 1s. 6d. each.

- 
1. Bible Blessings. By Rev. Richard Newton.
  2. One Hour a Week: Fifty-two Bible Lessons for the Young.
  3. The Best Things. By Rev. Richard Newton.
  4. Grace Harvey and her Cousins.
  5. Lessons from Rose Hill; and Little Nannette.
  6. Great and Good Women: Biographies for Girls. By  
LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY.
  7. At Home and Abroad; or, Uncle William's Adventures.
  8. The Kind Governess; or, How to make Home Happy.
  9. Christmas at the Beacon: A Tale for the Young. By  
ELLEN PALMER.
  10. The Sculptor of Bruges. By Mrs. W. G. Hall.
  11. The Story of a Moss Rose; or, Ruth and the Orphan  
Family. By CHARLES BRUCE.
  12. The Swedish Singer; or, The Story of Vanda Rosendahl.  
By Mrs. W. G. HALL.
  13. My Beautiful Home; or, Lily's Search. By Chas. Bruce.
  14. Alfred and his Mother; or, Seeking the Kingdom. By  
KATHERINE E. MAY.
  15. Asriel; or, The Crystal Cup. A Tale for the Young.  
By Mrs. HENDERSON.
  16. Wilton School; or, Harry Campbell's Revenge. A Tale.  
By F. E. WEATHERLY.
  17. Percy and Ida. By Katherine E. May.
  18. Fred Graham's Resolve. By the Author of 'Mat and Sofie,'  
etc. etc.
  19. The Sea and the Savages: A Story of Adventure. By  
HAROLD LINCOLN.
  20. Summer Holidays at Silversea. By E. Rosalie Salmon.
  21. The Story of John Heywood: An Historical Tale of the Time  
of Harry VIII. By CHARLES BRUCE, Author of 'How Frank  
began to Climb,' etc.



## NIMMO'S ONE SHILLING ILLUSTRATED JUVENILE BOOKS.

Foolscap 8vo, Coloured Frontispieces, handsomely bound in cloth,  
Illuminated, price 1s. each.

~~~~~

1. **Four Little People and their Friends.**
2. **Elizabeth; or, The Exiles of Siberia. A Tale**
from the French of MADAME COTTIN.
3. **Paul and Virginia. From the French of**
BERNARDIN SAINT-PIERRE.
4. **Little Threads: Tangle Thread, Golden**
Thread, and Silver Thread.
5. **Benjamin Franklin, the Printer Boy.**
6. **Barton Todd, and the Young Lawyer.**
7. **The Perils of Greatness: The Story of Alex-**
ander Menzikoff.
8. **Little Crowns, and How to Win them. By**
REV. JOSEPH A. COLLIER.
9. **Great Riches: Nelly Rivers' Story. By Aunt**
FANNY.
10. **The Right Way; and The Contrast.**
11. **The Daisy's First Winter. And other Stories.**
By HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.
12. **The Man of the Mountain. And other**
Stories.
13. **Better than Rubies. Stories for the Young,**
Illustrative of Familiar Proverbs. With 62 Illustrations.

[Continued on next page.]

NIMMO'S ONE SHILLING ILLUSTRATED JUVENILE BOOKS,

CONTINUED.

~~~~~

14. **Experience Teaches.** And other Stories for the Young, Illustrative of Familiar Proverbs. With 39 Illustrations.
15. **The Happy Recovery.** And other Stories for the Young. With 26 Illustrations.
16. **Gratitude and Probity.** And other Stories for the Young. With 21 Illustrations.
17. **The Two Brothers.** And other Stories for the Young. With 18 Illustrations.
18. **The Young Orator.** And other Stories for the Young. With 9 Illustrations.
19. **Simple Stories to Amuse and Instruct Young Readers.** With Illustrations.
20. **The Three Friends.** And other Stories for the Young. With Illustrations.
21. **Sybil's Sacrifice.** And other Stories for the Young. With 12 Illustrations.
22. **The Old Shepherd.** And other Stories for the Young. With Illustrations.
23. **The Young Officer.** And other Stories for the Young. With Illustrations.
24. **The False Heir.** And other Stories for the Young. With Illustrations.
25. **The Old Farmhouse; or, Alice Morton's Home.** And other Stories. By M. M. POLLARD.
26. **Twyford Hall; or, Rosa's Christmas Dinner,** and what she did with it. By CHARLES BRUCE.
27. **The Discontented Weathercock.** And other Stories for Children. By M. JONES.
28. **Out at Sea, and other Stories.** By Two Authors.

## NIMMO'S NINEPENNY SERIES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

*In demy 18mo, with Illustrations, elegantly bound in cloth.*

~~~~~

THIS Series of Books will be found unequalled for genuine interest and value, and it is believed they will be eagerly welcomed by thoughtful children of both sexes. Parents may rest assured that each Volume teaches some noble lesson, or enforces some valuable truth.

1. In the Brave Days of Old ; or, The Story of the Spanish Armada. For Boys and Girls.
2. The Lost Ruby. By the Author of 'The Basket of Flowers,' etc.
3. Leslie Ross ; or, Fond of a Lark. By Charles Bruce.
4. My First and Last Voyage. By Benjamin Clarke.
5. Little Katie : A Fairy Story. By Charles Bruce.
6. Being Afraid. And other Stories for the Young. By CHARLES STUART.
7. The Toll-Keepers. And other Stories for the Young. By BENJAMIN CLARKE.
8. Dick Barford : A Boy who would go down Hill. By CHARLES BRUCE.
9. Joan of Arc ; or, The Story of a Noble Life. Written for Girls.
10. Helen Siddal : A Story for Children. By Ellen Palmer.
11. Mat and Sofie : A Story for Boys and Girls.
12. Peace and War. By the Author of 'The Basket of Flowers,' etc.
13. Perilous Adventures of a French Soldier in Algeria.
14. The Magic Glass ; or, The Secret of Happiness.
15. Hawks' Dene : A Tale for Children. By Katherine E. MAY.
16. Little Maggie. And other Stories. By the Author of 'The Joy of Well-Doing,' etc. etc.
17. The Brother's Legacy ; or, Better than Gold. By M. M. POLLARD.
18. The Little Sisters ; or, Jealousy. And other Stories for the Young. By the Author of 'Little Maggie,' etc.
19. Kate's New Home. By Cecil Scott, Author of 'Chryssie Lyle,' etc.

NIMMO'S SIXPENNY JUVENILE BOOKS.

Demy 18mo, Illustrated, handsomely bound in cloth, price 6d. each.

1. Pearls for Little People.
2. Great Lessons for Little People.
3. Reason in Rhyme: A Poetry Book for the Young.
4. Aesop's Little Fable Book.
5. Grapes from the Great Vine.
6. The Pot of Gold.
7. Story Pictures from the Bible.
8. The Tables of Stone: Illustrations of the Commandments.
9. Ways of Doing Good.
10. Stories about our Dogs.
By H. BEECHER STOWE.
11. The Red-Winged Goose.
12. The Hermit of the Hills.
13. Effie's Christmas, and other Stories. By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.
14. A Visit to Grandmother, and other Stories for the Young.
15. Bible Stories for Young People. By A. AUSTEN.
16. The Little Woodman and his Dog Caesar. By Mrs. SHERWOOD.
17. Among the Mountains: Tales for the Young. By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.
18. Little Gems for Little Readers.
19. Do your Duty, come what will, and other Stories for the Young.
20. Noble Joe: A Tale for Children. By A. AUSTEN.
21. Lucy Vernon, and other Stories for the Young.
22. Anecdotes of Favourite Animals told for Children. By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.
23. Little Henry and his Bearer. By Mrs. SHERWOOD.
24. The Holidays at Wilton, and other Stories. By ADELAIDE AUSTEN.
25. Ohryssie Lyle: A Tale for the Young. By OCEIL SCOTT.
26. Little Elsie among the Quarrymen. A Story for the Little Ones. By ELLEN PALMER, Author of 'Christmas at the Beacon,' etc.

NIMMO'S FOURPENNY JUVENILE BOOKS.

The above Series of Books is also kept in Paper Covers, elegantly printed in Colours, price 4d. each.

. The distinctive features of the Sixpenny, Ninepenny, and One Shilling Juvenile Books are: The Subjects of each Volume have been selected with a due regard to Instruction and Entertainment; they are well printed on fine paper; they are illustrated with Coloured Frontispieces and beautiful Engravings; and they are elegantly bound.

NIMMO'S POPULAR RELIGIOUS GIFT BOOKS.

18mo, finely printed on toned paper, handsomely bound in cloth extra, bevelled boards, gilt edges, price 1s. each.

1. **Across the River: Twelve Views of Heaven.**
By NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.; R. W. HAMILTON, D.D.; ROBERT S. CANDLISH, D.D.; JAMES HAMILTON, D.D.; etc. etc. etc.
2. **Emblems of Jesus; or, Illustrations of Emmanuel's Character and Work.**
3. **Life Thoughts of Eminent Christians.**
4. **Comfort for the Desponding; or, Words to Soothe and Cheer Troubled Hearts.**
5. **The Chastening of Love: Words of Consolation for the Christian Mourner.** By JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., Manchester.
6. **The Cedar Christian, and other Practical Papers.** By the Rev. THEODORE L. CUTLER.
7. **Consolation for Christian Mothers Bereaved of Little Children.** By A FRIEND OF MOURNERS.
8. **The Orphan; or, Words of Comfort for the Fatherless and Motherless.**
9. **Gladdening Streams; or, The Waters of the Sanctuary.** A Book for Fragments of Time on each Lord's Day of the Year.
10. **Spirit of the Old Divines.**
11. **Choice Gleanings from Sacred Writers.**
12. **Direction in Prayer; or, The Lord's Prayer**
Illustrated in a Series of Expositions. By PETER GRANT, D.D., Author of 'Emblems of Jesus,' etc.
13. **Scripture Imagery.** By Peter Grant, D.D., Author of 'Emblems of Jesus,' etc.

NIMMO'S

Royal Illuminated Legends.

ONE SHILLING EACH.

Gorgeously Illuminated, after the Mediæval manner, in Colours and Gold, by MARCUS WARD, Illuminator to the Queen.

Each Story, or Legend, is illustrated with a set of brilliant Pictures, designed in the quaint spirit of Mediæval times, and printed in Colours and Gold, by MARCUS WARD, Illuminator to the Queen.

The charm of novelty is still further heightened by the Stories being related in Antient Ballad form, with appropriate Music, arranged in an easy style, for Voice and Pianoforte, suited to little folks or great folks, and minstrels of all degrees.

Ye Interestynge Storie of

1. *Cinderella and ye Lyttel Glasse Slyppere.*2. *The Fayre One with the Golden Locks.*3. *The Sleeping Beauty; or, The Enchanted Palace.*

Told in Verse, by ALFRED TENNYSON, Poet Laureate. (Published by permission of Messrs. STRAHAN & Co.)

Ye Pathetic Ballad of

4. *Ladye Ouncebelle and Lord Lovelle.*

THE ROYAL ILLUMINATED BOOK OF LEGENDS.

First Series, containing above four Legends, handsomely bound in Cloth, 5s.

5. *Pocahontas: A Tale of Old Virginie.*6. *King Alfred and Othere (The Discoverer of the North Cape).*

Poetry by H. W. LONGFELLOW. (Published by permission of Messrs. J. R. Osgood & Co.)

7. *Ye Marquis of Carabas; or, Puss in Boots.*8. *Ye Hynde of ye Forest; or, Ye Enchanted Princesse.*

THE ROYAL ILLUMINATED BOOK OF LEGENDS.

Second Series, containing above four Legends, handsomely bound in Cloth, 5s.

Royal Illuminated Nursery Rhymes.

SIXPENCE EACH.

Illuminated by MARCUS WARD, in same style as the 'Legends,' with Music complete.

1. *Sing a Song of Sixpence.*2. *The Little Market Woman.*3. *The Carrion Crow.*4. *{ Jack and Gill. A Little Man and his Little Gun.*

THE ROYAL ILLUMINATED BOOK OF NURSERY RHYMES.

First Series, containing above four, handsomely bound in Cloth, price 2s. 6d.

5. *Little Bo-Peep.*6. *Simple Simon.*7. *Mother Hubbard and her Dog.*8. *Four Nursery Rhymes.*

THE ROYAL ILLUMINATED BOOK OF NURSERY RHYMES.

Second Series, containing above four, handsomely bound in Cloth, price 2s. 6d.

'Nothing so magnificent has ever been attempted before.'—*Public Opinion.*

